WORKWAYS

FOR

THEME-BUILDING

(Revised Edition)

By

C. H. WARD

Author of *Sentence and Theme*, *The Junior Highway to English*, *What Is English?*

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WORKWAYS

for

Theme-Building, Revised

PART ONE

THE STRATEGY OF PLANNING A COURSE

Section 1: For Teachers Who Have no Theory of Composition

In Sections 8 and 9 are definite suggestions as to the best order of lessons for different kinds of courses in *Theme-Building*. If you do not care about the reasons for the suggestions, but prefer to take them on trust, skip all the rest of Part One. Sections 2-7 are for those inquiring spirits who wish to see what underlies a text-maker's advice.

Section 2: What Is Your Theory of Composition? (The only philosophical section of *Workways*)

I was once in conversation with a Commissioner of Education who had invited me to speak at a convention of superintendents. He was a veteran who had during forty years, in two states, directed educational policy. "What," I asked him, "would you most like to have said about this vexed problem of composition?" And he replied as follows:

"I am sure that the greatest need in teaching composition is that pupils should be interested in the topics assigned. I would, for example, urge teachers to use local history and to arouse an eagerness for presenting the subjects with zest. If pupils are enlisted in such an enterprise, they will write well. If they do not like the subjects assigned, their themes

will be full of errors. I would have no emphasis put on any rules or technicalities; I should rely on stimulating interest." That is one theory of composition. It is held by many captains of education; it is a generous and noble conception; it warms the heart; and there is doubtless some truth in it.

Another theory, more widely held and more esthetic, has been thus set forth by a very noted president of a famous American university: "There is a theory that the way to teach composition is to have pupils write constantly and on all sorts of topics. This is a fallacy. The way to teach young people how to write good English is to teach them to read good English." That is a beautiful thesis, sanctioned by ages of rhetorical authority. It is bolstered by many an ancient maxim such as "Give your days and nights to the study of Addison"; "Make yourself a sedulous ape of the masters," etc., etc.

The commissioner and the president would advise against the use of any textbook. In the serene regions where they live insphered the teaching of composition is a process by which ardent idealism kindles divine flame in the eager mind of youthful genius.

From such lofty idealism you may descend through all the grades of theory, down to a level where school composition is regarded as nothing but a drive at minimum essentials. On what stage do you live? If you hold any general theory, it is useless to expect the best results from any textbook until you realize what your position is. You cannot plan a course to advantage until you have defined your principles to yourself. Then you can see where a textmaker's ideas differ from yours and to what extent they are to be disregarded.

Workways does not invite any teacher to change his theory. It does not set forth any theory, because *Theme-Building* is not based on such a foundation. These books simply record a practice that has been gradually developed during a quarter of a century of work with American students—a kind of practice that is very general among experienced teachers. If you have a theory of teaching, you will naturally suppose that I have one, and you will look for it and expect a conflict with it. Cease looking. Keep your ideal and study how it may be adapted to a working program.

I never could arrive at any such theory as "arousing eagerness" or "reading good books," nor have I ever met any successful teacher who worked by such a theory. Every good teacher that I know does all he can to arouse eagerness and to encourage reading, but he never relies on such pleasures to produce results. He depends upon a definite, practical program of work. He no more succeeds by inspirational devices than an architect rears buildings by playing music to bricks and mortar—though he would not deny that Orpheus could do all the work with a lyre. He simply admits that he is not an Orpheus.

The age of the lyre seems to have passed. If you still have some faith in it, be thankful and lighten your labors as much as possible. But be skeptical. Keep an eye on the results and see if they are as firm as they should be. Compare your theory with the following statement, which is quoted from page 12 of the *Pilot Book* for *Sentence and Theme, Revised,* and is the sixth of eight paragraphs about "securing results."

"Most of our critics, who print exhortation or speak it from platforms, are people who have no practice in the art of teaching. They use vague terms and general assumptions which are misleading in the highest degree. They never descend to the minute and discouraging facts of daily life in the classroom, where an average teacher deals with average pupils who have the average amount of ignorance of rudiments and the average lack of ambition for excellence. Professors of literature, editors, administrators—all assume insensibly the gifted teacher and the eager pupil; they speak in terms of professional attainments, and speak in terms, not of *means,* but of beautiful *achievement.* They appreciate generously the results of such a course as that given in *Sentence and Theme,* but they are apt to be horrified at the only means yet known for reaching the results. They suppose that pleasing sentences are secured by dwelling in an esthetic atmosphere. The more you study their comments, the more you will perceive that this is the case. They sorely mislead us by never condescending to the humble *means* which we teachers have to use. A violin is not born of symphonies, but is manufactured in a shop where shavings and a glue pot are to be seen. *Sentence and Theme* tries to be a shop for real work."

So does *Theme-Building* try to be a shop. Don't be antagonized by the humble equipment, but adapt it to the higher methods and to your particular theory.

Section 3: Modern Facts about Rhetoric

Rhetoric has been until very recently a university subject. It has been a fine art designed for a select body of college students who have had a thorough linguistic training and who are ambitious to improve the niceties of their style. Professors have made textbooks for this select class of advanced students, and their treatises have been models for high-school books. Elementary knowledge has been presupposed; all the rudimentary skills have been assumed as matter of course; the ambition and pride and sensitiveness of the student have been taken for granted. And the assumptions were reasonably true as late as 1890, or even 1900.

They are now true of only a very small percentage of high-school students. I quote from page 14 of the *Pilot Book:*

"The great change in the conditions of composition has come about within forty years, most of it within twenty years—too fast for us to keep up with. Any person fifty years old was educated in a different world from the one in which we now try to teach composition. 'Why should my boy,' exclaims an irate parent, 'have to learn punctuation? I never had to learn it. I went through college without it.' The answer is very simple: 'You could not go through a good *high school* now without it.' That is one little chip to show how the current of composition swirls and eddies where it never ran before. We teachers have to adjust ourselves to an unparalleled revolution in all the technique of an art. The method that secured results in 1890 is powerless in modern life. We must face the facts as they now are and adapt our technique to them."

Section 4: The Road to Results

If a teacher is to fit the young people of today for the life that now is, he must adapt himself to the facts of modern conditions. To old-fashioned or dainty people these facts may seem disagreeable. To cheerful dwellers amid

things-as-they-are the facts are nowise disturbing. But they are peculiar.

The road to results now runs much more through rudiments than it used to. Indeed the track has changed so far and so suddenly that many a middle-aged teacher is placidly promenading in the shady lanes of antiquity, while the traffic of composition passes, unknown to him, upon a new and crowded highway. Here the sights and sounds are strange; to elderly people they may seem uncouth. But here they are, as certain as the sedans and trucks of our era. This manual is no place for an explanation of the new method of minimum essentials, or of all the new technique of teaching the elements—for example, the new knowledge of the spelling problem or the use of grammar as a rhetorical tool. That ground is covered in the *Pilot Book*, pages 10-60. Any teacher who wishes to understand all these antecedents to a course in *Theme-Building* should apply to the publishers for a copy of the *Pilot Book* for *Sentence and Theme, Revised.* It will be sent without charge.

I will present here some sample excerpts, so that you may judge whether the *Pilot Book* would be of any use.

Take no advice on trust. "We teachers of English should be suspicious of all advice that is offered to us in this age of educational revolution. I want every teacher to read the following pages with a healthy skepticism and a determination to try out the statements before accepting them. In every case where you are surprised or incredulous remember that I was once equally incredulous. I was persuaded only by the hard knocks of experience, and I record here only what experience has taught me."

Experience. "I had taught fifteen years before it occurred to me to publish anything about teaching composition. All that while I worked along as a teacher should; keeping his eyes on the daily facts, seeing what Jack and Bill have failed to understand, and trying to find some way to make them understand. I had never so much as seen the cover of a pedagogical journal, never knew what an experiment or an investigation was, never had a thought of trying to tell anybody anything about teaching. I moiled along in a little school, hunting for devices that would start operations in the brains of Jack and Bill."

The spelling mystery. "I can explain the mystery of spelling most vividly by giving a sketch of my own efforts to grapple with it. When I began to teach, in 1898, I was entirely unconscious that there was any mystery. I trustfully dictated 25 words a day from a speller, advancing from *autumn, yellow,* and *sword,* through *sickle, scythe,* and *squirrel,* to *garrulous, grotesque,* and *magnanimity.* I never heard or read a word to show me that I was wasting the boys' time. In 1914 I grew so bold as to formulate the truth —obvious enough now at last—in an article for the *English Journal,* called 'Intensive Spelling' . . . . . The student who masters 100 forms has skill for mastering all forms. If he has the will to go on to a mastery of 300, he can be captain of his fate thenceforth. That is education; it is mental power. What seemed a dreary little arena of 'only 300' will be shown by the new knowledge to be a conquest of Canaan."

The wrong kind of grammar. "Grammar is championed for several reasons, all poor: (1) That it ought not to be given up hurriedly; (2) that it is good mental training; (3) that it informs us about usage; (4) that it enables us to speak correctly. The last reason is the one most commonly given; yet there is hardly any truth in it. . . . . You may begin to guess that most of the antagonism to grammar is merely a dislike of certain elements that have always been the prominent ones in the textbooks of the past. I heartily share this dislike. I think that nearly all the study of forms and classifications and mechanical rules is worse than useless, that it is harmful. There is an entirely different conception of grammar, one which I attempted to explain in the *School Review* for April, 1916."

Punctuation. "When I emerged from graduate courses in English and began to teach in a school, my mind was of course all full of West Saxon and Chaucerian pronunciation; I had notebooks on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama which I thought would dazzle the seniors beneficially; I was stocked with gems of criticism and a wealth of literary sources. The subject of punctuation was nowhere visible on my horizon. But I thought it was well that young men bound for college should use periods at appropriate places and should so use commas as to 'express their meaning.' A very naïve, comical

tenderfoot I appear to myself now as I look back on the autumn of 1898 and recall my ignorance of the powers of schoolboys. 'Express their meaning'! I might as well have expected them to express their sense of harmony on a pipe-organ before they knew the difference between manual keys and pedal keys. . . . . The fact of experience is that such drill teaches variety of forms, secures freedom of expression, and is in the end a real stimulus to spontaneity."

The difficulties of training in diction. "Some time our American schools will do a great deal with vocabulary building. In French schools such training bulks large; it is done with a well-developed technique and is effective. I am not arguing against vocabulary work; I am only saying that in present conditions a teacher should not attempt much of it until she has surveyed the dangers and knows the possibility of wasting time, unless she has unusual knowledge and skill."

Paragraphs. "We have almost no knowledge of how authors make paragraphs, but we know a great deal about rhetorical recipes for manufacturing paragraphs. For my part, I have small faith that results can be secured in the ninth or tenth grades by any of these recipes—not even by the common one of building from a topic sentence. I have never seen in themes any proof that teachers secure noticeable improvement by teaching paragraph structure as a separate type of composition. The whole question is subtle and involved in controversy; far be it from me to assert that I know all about it. I only assert that a teacher should not heedlessly take it for granted that good results will come from elaborate work with paragraphs. Her chance of success in that field is not good."

Hitching to the stars. "The teacher who lacks the vision and the faith converts our harness into clanking chains. Thousands like her have made the essentials odious and have caused the fear which echoes in the *English Journal*. We should be grateful to an editor who keeps sounding the alarm against the tribe of rabid minimalists.

"But there is another tribe that does more damage and that is much more to be dreaded—the teachers who are impatient of means and expect to hitch to the stars without a harness. Some of them may make a showing with the upper tenth of a class (though I have never happened to see an

example of their success); but they leave the ninety per cent in the mire, floundering, abandoned. . . . . The minimum essentials are a harness. By themselves they have no force, but without them the starry forces will never draw our wagons."

Section 5: Review Is the Foundation of Success

None of us like to use our precious time this year for doing last year's work; we want to progress. Yet, in the present status of our education, there is no labor more fruitful than making last year's foundation secure before we try to build on it; and no mistake is more disastrous than to assume that the foundation is firm. It is much more likely to be soft or full of holes.

Why is last year's work never done? The answer is not pessimistic and is not a charge of incompetence against the teachers of certain years. It would appear that our educational system has grown with such rapidity, has aspired so high, and has had to absorb such an increasing body of students of decreasing ability, that our teaching has not been able to insure a proper degree of thoroughness at any point in the line. The blame for low achievement seems not to lie, in any large measure, upon us teachers, but upon the material with which we deal. Certainly in this era we shall do no good if we reproach the teachers in the grades below us with not working hard enough. Perhaps a concrete illustration from my own small boarding-school will prove something: For twelve years I received into a tenth-year class the boys prepared by a colleague, and I passed these same boys on to the same colleague for their eleventh-year work; I was always disappointed because so much review of ninth-year rudiments was necessary before I could go ahead with what I thought my proper job in the tenth year. Though we compared notes and explained what was lacking and did our best to be thorough in the right ways, we could never satisfy ourselves by securing adequate preparation. The boys' minds seemed never to have been habituated to right methods of study and carefulness; after making our best efforts in the ninth and tenth years it was still necessary to take time in the eleventh year for stopping the gaps that I had left in knowledge of rudiments. We quit finding fault with each other and ac-

cepted the twentieth-century facts as cheerfully as we could.

This does not mean that we resigned ourselves to a sad fate—by no means. Every year we made some progress in the art of laying surer foundations. We advised each other as to what was most needed and strove harder to emphasize just those points in our teaching. Some such give-and-take of advice will be the only way, in any school, of avoiding the endless review of matters that are supposed to be taught earlier in the curriculum.

So general is the recognition of this lack of preparation in our schools that all recent good lists of minimum essentials demand, as a first requisite for any given year, "Establishing the matters supposed to be taught in the previous year." The makers of such lists realize the truth stated at the beginning of this Section: "Review is the foundation of success."

To begin with Lesson 1 of *Theme-Building* and to go peacefully on with the improvement of sentences, without first discovering whether a review is necessary, would be courting defeat in the whole year's program. In my own school I have never met a class that did not need review—though every class had been carefully trained. Every time I hurried over the necessary review I lost ground. Whenever I suppressed my impatience and was thorough in review, I achieved a greater total in the year's results. Though it may be that there are teachers who err on the side of too much review, I have never heard of one. All the successful teachers that I know consider it their sacred duty to review essentials. Let me cite an example—a rather extreme one, but typical—which I heard from a man who was teaching seniors in a large suburban high school of a western city: "I found that they did not know letter forms; so I proceeded to teach the forms. For two weeks I did hardly anything else." When I asked why seniors should not learn such mechanical matters in a two-day review, he replied, "I can't imagine *why*. I just observed that it was *so*. And I am not going to disgrace the school and deceive these students by allowing them to graduate without knowing how to write a formal letter." His wisdom seems to me beyond dispute—however harrowing it may be to give up some senior literature for such a rudiment. Can you quarrel with his notion of duty?

If the seniors in a certain American graduate school of business cannot write decently enough to earn a passing mark when judged by freshman standards, they are required to qualify themselves, or they lose their degree. (One year it was found that two-thirds of these college graduates were thus deficient.) If in a certain college of science a senior cannot avoid illiterate blunders, he cannot receive a diploma. In most of our universities there is now a provision that all freshmen who have not mastered high-school elements must take a special course, without any credit toward a degree; and most universities find that from ten to fifty per cent are as woefully lacking as that in junior high-school rudiments. These college and graduate-school rulings are proofs of the universal truth that every stage in education is a fraud unless it demands a mastery of previous stages. If college freshmen do not know what a sentence is (and a large fraction of them do not know), their instruction is a farce unless they first learn, by review, what a sentence is. Much more is this true of high-school students. There is no magic in any textbook that will remove the primal necessity of reviewing when we discover rudimentary ignorance. In many schools (among which is my own) the Appendix of *Theme-Building* is the most essential part of the book. (See further in the comments on the Anteroom, in Part Two of *Workways*.)

Section 6: What's the Use of Grammar?

Attaining a knowledge of sentences (as urged in Section 5 and in the Anteroom of *Theme-Building*) is only one reason for the review of grammar. A teacher who did not understand the other reason would find himself unable to plan a course in *Theme-Building* to good advantage. The rest of this Section explains the other reason—the rhetorical one.

The use of grammar for rhetorical purposes is not very generally understood. Just recently, for example, I have seen a syllabus of studies which, while it urged the need of grammar, gave no reason except that grammar was necessary for understanding correct idiom. The reason is doubtful; certainly it is a very small one. A knowledge of sentence elements is the only way I have discovered of teaching the average literal-minded student how to make his sentences

pleasing. I might, if my time were unlimited, show him hundreds of examples of prepositions and conjunctions and participles, without teaching him any names or any formal syntax; and I might thus gradually lead him to subordinate his ideas and to use parallel structure in his sentences. If a student is far above the average, I can train him by a non-grammar method. But since I have no extra years for that roundabout method, and since the class is not composed of specially talented students, I must find a more rational way to work. How small my prejudice is for this method and how I have to rely on it can be judged from the next paragraph.

When I originally wrote *Theme-Building,* I was weary of being called a grammar extremist and wished to make a pure, uplifting textbook which should not contain any reference to the parts of speech. But if I had carried out my desire, I could not have talked about the ways of securing variety in sentences. It is useless to give an exhortation like "Subordinate your ideas"; the only way to be effective is to use such terms as "complex sentences" or "begin with modifiers." Even those terms will remain vague abstractions unless the student has a ready understanding of subordinate clauses and prepositions. He will never have the understanding until he knows about adverbs, adverbial phrases, and adverb clauses—and much more. Much as I should like to evade grammar, I cannot if I am to do honest teaching. Therefore the first edition of *Theme-Building* depended much on grammar in the part that dealt with sentence-betterment. There has been no escaping grammar in the revised edition. It is here because it is the only way yet found of securing results economically. I have no more theory about grammar for composition than I have about hoeing for vegetables: I discover that cultivated plants will not flourish without hoeing, and I also discover that good results will not grow in sentences without grammar.

I offer in this paragraph an illustration of the way in which many esthetic people shudder at grammar, close their eyes to it, but prize the effect. A university professor, who had been reading some themes from my school commented thus: "Your boys are able to subordinate their ideas and to frame pleasing sentences. How do you secure those effects?" I began to tell him about "the parts of speech, first, in order

to have a ready knowledge of phrases, verbals, and"—but I saw that his eyes were drooping and that he thought I had switched to some unrelated topic. He had no curiosity about the true answer. He would never have credited it. His mind would not descend to such a humble, matter-of-fact process. No—he expected me to talk about beautiful generalities, like "seek to stimulate their ambition for excellence." Being unwilling to bore him and bring myself low in his estimation, I abruptly stopped telling him the facts and put to him a question about "subordinating." The light of interest relumed in his eyes, and he then proceeded *to tell me* about the right mode of stimulating ambition for excellence. He will never know how the results are achieved, but will abide calmly in his literary fancies.

If you know how to produce improvement by grammar, never attempt to tell such a critic about your procedure. He will think less of you. Say nothing about the facts of your method. Receive his commendations in respectful silence and ask him for advice. So doing, you shall acquire merit.

Any critic of high-school methods, if his ideas have been formed in academic bowers, assumes that improvement in composition comes from training in the use of words. For that supposition there is much warrant. It is true that the most noticeable difference between the style of a Stevenson and the style of an average boy is a difference in vocabulary. Any sensitive reader is hurt by the meager dullness of the boy's word-store; he is pleased by the variety and aptness of the diction in any composition written by a gifted student. It is this distinction in vocabulary that has always received most comment; to this the older generation of rhetoricians gave their attention. They were right in so doing, for they were addressing a select lot of students, masters of Latin syntax, who knew the fundamentals and who were polishing their style. For us, today, in the actual conditions of American education, the suppositions have hardly any basis in fact. We are dealing with the whole multitude, whose stylistic foundations have never been laid. We are not putting on a polish; we are trying to make a framework stand up.

If, then, we direct our energies at smoothing and amplifying diction, we shall find ourselves trying to beautify iron

with silver-polish. Our proper business is, first, to convert the iron to steel girders, and then—not till then—begin to consider the marble facing of the structure.

That means, in plain language, that we shall do most good to the greatest number of students, and have most to show for our labors, if we give training in the making of sturdy and varied sentences. If any student learns the knack of framing *a variety of well-made sentences,* he has made a great advance in composition, a noticeable and gratifying advance. Every student of average ability can learn that knack. Parents and principals will credit you with skill if you impart the ability to cast sentences in the molds of mature and agreeable forms.

This process of sentence-improvement is begun in *Sentence and Theme,* but only begun. The first year of work in *Theme-Building* is a strengthening and extending of the simple principles—for example: (1) decrease the number of compound sentences, (2) begin with adverb clauses, (3) begin with phrases, (4) use, in many ways, appositives, (5) use verbals, (6) use two verbs with one subject. The nature of this sort of work I tried to explain in the *Pilot Book,* by the following illustration:

"How grammar is an engine for rhetorical purposes can be shown best by a comparison of professional skill with ninth-grade ignorance. The following pair of sentences from *Treasure Island* will serve the purpose, if we scan them closely and make three comments on them.

> We pulled easily, by Silver's directions, not to weary the hands prematurely; and, after quite a long passage, landed at the mouth of the second river—that which runs down the woody cleft of the Spyglass. Thence, bending to our left, we began to ascend the slope toward a plateau.

"**Comment 1.** The skill that made those sentences can never be taught by any pedagogy—much less by the grammar program—for the skill is partly a matter of the management of a large vocabulary, which our students do not possess: the uses of *by* and *weary* and *prematurely,* the formality of *that which* and *thence* and *ascend,* the knowledge of *woody* and *cleft* and *plateau.* Grammar will not convey a vocabulary nor an instinct for cadences and Scottish dignity.

"**Comment 2.** But by the path of grammar the student may acquire the other elements in Stevenson's skill—his management of modifiers for clearness and agreeable variety.

"**Comment 3.** A small percentage of our high-school students (I think not above five per cent) have an instinct for the management of sentence elements and acquire power by familiarity with good models; but the other ninety-five per cent have no such instinct, and after a four-year course in literature will write with an unchanged, monotonous crudeness. (Compare the deliberate judgment of the freshman English faculty of the University of Wisconsin: 'The vast majority of our high-school pupils are not accustomed to such intellectual habits as might enable them to "absorb" from their reading the knowledge necessary to a correct use of English. Direct technical instruction in English is impracticable except upon the basis of a genuine familiarity with the elementary facts of English grammar.') They can learn an author's tricks of management only if they are shown step by step, detail after detail, what an author is doing when he builds an agreeable form of sentence.

"If the ordinary untrained ninth-grade pupil is asked to describe the same situation in American words, he will produce something like this:

> Parker told us not to tire ourselves, so we pulled easily on the oars. We landed at the mouth of the second stream that runs down the gully from Nob Hill after about an hour and we turned to our left there, we began to climb the trail toward Moosehead.

"What are the ways in which the student's syntax differs from Stevenson's?

1. The student does not know when he has reached the end of a sentence.
2. He begins each sentence with the subject and follows it immediately with the verb.
3. He relies on the compound and the simple sentence.
4. He uses no appositive construction.
5. He does not use participles in place of verbs.
6. He does not use an infinitive of purpose.
7. He does not take advantage of prepositional phrases.
8. He allows phrases to come in clumsily at the wrong part of the sentence.

9. He has no knowledge of whether modifiers are restrictive in meaning, and so gives the idea that there are two streams where there is only one.
10. He does not use one subject for two verbs.
11. He does not indicate the major divisions of a sentence.
12. Any experienced teacher can tell from this brief sample of writing that all the pages of the student's themes will be of the same dreary uniformity; not one of Stevenson's devices will ever by any chance slip into the themes. There will never be a question to relieve the monotony, never an imperative, never some words between the subject and the verb, never a goodly gerund, seldom an adverb clause at the beginning of a sentence, hardly ever a pleasant adverb or preposition in that strategic position, rarely a series of similar elements to compact an impression. No—this poor student knows no grammar.....

"When he has covered the long road, what has he been enabled to substitute for the childish, sprawling sentences that he once wrote? He can produce something of this sort—even if we suppose that there has been only one improvement in his vocabulary:

> We pulled easily on the oars, according to Parker's directions, not to tire ourselves; and, after about an hour, landed at the mouth of the second stream—the one that runs down the gully from Nob Hill. Then, turning to our left, we began to climb the trail toward Moosehead.

"This pair of sentences may be bare enough compared with the arabesques that are in professional work, but they are beautiful compared with his sentences before he had been over the grammar road."

Section 7: Planning a Course—The Five Elements

I should prefer not to write this Section, because we must all teach according to our own lights and personalities, and advice is apt to seem presumptuous. Be assured that I offer suggestions with all proper diffidence and with no wish to persuade anyone to alter his mode of work. I address only such teachers as are not sure of their ideas and wish to experiment.

Your year's work will consist of five elements: (1) some review of the mechanics of spelling and punctuation, (2) sentence-betterment, (3) paragraphs, (4) oral composition, (5) written composition. I will comment on each element.

1. **Mechanics.** The majority of our college freshmen today are weak in spelling, punctuation, and sentence-structure. Presumably most classes using *Theme-Building* are weak in those respects. Presumably your first and most important duty is to clean up these forms of ignorance by review and by perpetual vigilance. Do not regard that statement as merely the belief of one text-maker; it is the almost unanimous opinion of good teachers in every sort of American school. Most principals and most sensible parents will commend you more heartily for rooting out elementary errors than for an attempt to cultivate the graces while the errors flourish. And rooting out errors may be the most noticeable part of your work. If "noticeable" seems a rather low-minded appeal to self-advertising, reflect upon the following statement: Grubbing out habitual errors is probably the best service you can render to the intellects and morals of your students.

It is "probably" the best. It will not be if a teacher loses his sense of proportion, or if he becomes engrossed in scalp-hunting for misspellings and comma-sentences, or if he loses sight of the guiding principle, "Set yourself free."

Hence I have always found that I succeeded best in planning my own course in *Theme-Building* if I emphasized at the outset the necessity of overcoming fixed wrong habits. The engine for this operation is the Appendix. If any class has not mastered the "demons" of spelling, I refer it (or such members as need the training) to the spelling lists. I have never assigned an entire lesson in spelling, though that would be the right move if a class had had, during previous years, very little spelling drill in the few hundred common words commonly misspelled. For detailed explanations of the spelling problem, if you have to wrestle with it in your class, see the *Pilot Book* for *Sentence and Theme, Revised.*

If I find that comma sentences and heedless punctuation are general, I know that there is no way to health in my composition class except to assign a review of at least the fundamental rules in the Punctuation Group of the Appendix.

If the ignorance is confined to a few, I require those few to bring themselves up to standard. The punctuation rules are grouped in order of direct importance. A teacher can set a whole class right by requiring that the first two or three of these rules shall be scrupulously observed in the first written theme, that these rules and two or three more shall be scrupulously observed in the second theme, and so on. In this way a class is not distracted by a general responsibility that amounts to nothing, but is held to a limited responsibility which is felt to be reasonable. A teacher is not obliged to correct all sorts of errors from the outset, but only those which are violations of recent and emphatic teaching. This concentrating of effort and building the idea of responsibility are ways of bringing careless students into line and making them realize the reasonableness of decency in sentences.

If my course is to aim at sentence betterment, and if I am to follow the grammar road, the class must know all the fundamentals of syntax—that is, of "what words are doing in sentences." I shall have small use for paradigms and classifications; I need a knowledge of the functions of words. If I talk to a class that is only hazily conscious of what an appositive is, I cannot make any impression upon them by my efforts to introduce appositives into their style. So if I find an ignorance of appositives or clauses or gerunds or prepositions (and I always do find it), I assign review lessons in those subjects until they become alive and responsive in the minds of the class.

If any class feels that it has "had" grammar and ought not to go back over the ground again, it may be good tact to assume that the opinion is right, to assign one or two of the first lessons, and to convict some of the better students of not knowing enough grammar to understand a program of variety in sentences. Then there could not be any sensible protest against a review.

Such is my conception of the first and most important element in successful planning of a course: to keep in the front of my mind the need of using the Appendix, to fight down old errors, to freshen the knowledge needed for rhetorical advance, and never to grudge the time needful for all such review.

I must try to bring home the nature of this first element

by showing how high it reaches in all teaching of composition. Ask any experienced teacher of college composition what standard of attainment he thinks essential for an entering freshman. He will not answer in terms of graceful style, or even of force and clarity; for he knows from sad experience that such a demand would be far above what he has a right to expect. Indeed he will be very unlikely to speak in terms of style. He yearns merely for a little plain knowledge of how to spell simple words, how to make real sentences (even if not pleasing), and how to build somewhat respectable paragraphs. He asks no more than could be secured by using *Sentence and Theme* year after year, *and this modest hope is not fulfilled.* Business men who have an interest in composition ask no more of high-school graduates than the colleges ask, *and their low standards are not met.* Any teacher who fails to establish the humble essentials is false to the coming generation. If any teacher did no more than establish them he would be a blessing to a community.

"Mismanaged Parts of Sentences" (Lessons 32-36) is material that is intermediate between the Appendix and the other lessons. This Group 1 of the Second Division is a treatment of the most usual blunders in syntax. Few are the classes that do not need it, and need it as fundamental exercise in clearing their compositions of elementary error. I treat this Group as a kind of Appendix material, to be assigned for review as occasion arises, to be dwelt upon, and to be used for specific reference by backward or careless students. Since it is concentrated matter, I assign it in as small lots as possible, preferably a page or two at a time in connection with other lessons.

2. **Sentence-betterment.** My own program is to follow pretty much the arrangement of the book—that is, to take the first eight Lessons on sentences in one, two, three order just as they stand, with only as much interspersing of paragraphs and whole compositions as is necessary for setting up the general composition requirements. There is some danger in that program for a teacher who likes the minutiae of sentences, who is glad of an excuse for dwelling upon them, and who is not ambitious to develop themes. For any other type of teacher there is no danger that I am aware of. Lessons 9 and 10 are distinctly more advanced in their

nature; not that they are much more difficult, but that they deal with a more rhetorical and decorative subject. Forward students will absorb and apply them with ease; backward students will never be artists enough to absorb them without much additional training and application work. Postpone these two Lessons until the spirit moves you. But use early in the year and use vigorously Lessons 1-8.

I should not use the Supplementary Lessons on Sentences (37-39) except with an A section or in a second year of work. (For hints about a two-year course see Section 9.)

I have found that classes which have been through much exercise in avoiding compound sentences will inevitably gather the idea that a compound sentence is, in itself, a poor kind. The book frequently asserts that "and" sentences are useful—if only for variety—and that even a "so" sentence would not be objectionable if it was unusual (see Lowell's sentence on page 25); but this truth will not be understood unless a teacher gives it added emphasis. The wrong impression will not, however, do much harm, because practically all students will still employ more than enough compound sentences, even after a long campaign against them. I have never happened to see a boy injured by over-emphasis upon the need of complex and longer simple sentences.

3. Paragraphs. How peculiar the paragraph problem is and how far we are from any solution of it will appear from this one example: A teacher whose skill I have lauded more than once in print, whose experience is longer than mine, and whose total of useful work for her city merits a monument—this woman has a rule for the whole city system of written composition that no paragraph is to be less than 150 words in length. And I have no doubt that she succeeds with this program—utterly at variance as it seems with all the paragraph lessons in *Theme-Building*. Her mind is perfectly clear as to what she is about. She is not teaching the facts of paragraph-making in literature, and she knows that she is not. Her aim is something quite different and entirely wise, an aim that I have tried to hold through all of the advice in *Theme-Building*. It is this: "Whenever you compose, feel responsible for *structure*." She has learned to stimulate that responsibility by not accepting any tiny paragraph or any paragraph of moderate length, and by insist-

ing that every paragraph shall furnish exercise in the real composing of several sentences into a unified structure. Every such effort is excellent training. The student who has met such requirements for four years is educated in composition and can easily learn to make the shorter paragraphs that are usual for variety in long compositions. This teacher's clearly defined purpose will win results. Almost any sane purpose, if it is temperately applied and carried out firmly, will give a student the sense of *structure* in whatever he writes—and that is true training in composition.

My own practice with paragraphs is to imitate the facts that authors show us—a policy which is also clearly defined and which is known to be effective. I should not encourage the vagaries of some literary paragraphing, any more than I tolerate the occasional sentence-errors of authors; for our business in school is to learn what is normal and usual. But I never object to a one-sentence paragraph—or even to a one-word paragraph—if a student shows that he really designed that sort of emphasis and would defend it when questioned.

All authors, so far as I can discover, have felt that a paragraph is a division-point in a continuous progress. They have seldom made paragraphs as separate compositions. That fact is no proof that the best teaching will be done by imitating authors, since school methods often have to be very different from professional standards. (See "Literary models may mislead" in the Index.) For example, sentence-errors are not errors in literature, but our easiest and most effective school method is to class them as the worst of all blunders until a student has shown that he has an author's knowledge of what he is about. Yet, even in the case of sentence-errors, I have always felt a strong pressure from the more skilful students to be allowed professional license; and I was always somewhat ill-at-ease until I learned a way to grant this freedom to boys who deserved it. In the case of paragraphs I should be still more uneasy if I set up a school taboo that was so constantly and with artistic purpose defied by all authors. I should always be subjected to a bombardment of protest from students. I feel much more secure in a method that allies itself with the authors instead of seeming to defy them.

Do not adopt my notions of teaching paragraphs. I might say, paradoxically, that I have not adopted them myself. I am still looking for a better approach to the subject, am trying to keep my mind open to new hints. Watch for any devices by which your own personality can convey skill in paragraphing. Depart from the book as often and as far as you feel conviction. But make sure that the conviction is not based on some mere prejudice or preconception which has formed unconsciously in your mind. We are all prone to allow some such theory to harden until it seems a valid truth. We must strive to fasten attention on students and to observe, with all our powers of sympathy, what effect we are producing on them.

So much for generalities about the teaching of paragraphs. I will next indicate what seems to me the relative importance of the different lessons on paragraphing.

Suppose that your class is not above average ability and that it is beginning its first year of work in *Theme-Building*. Lesson 11 is, during the first half of the year, worth all the rest. It gives the groundwork and the essential ideas. The Exercise is the most directly useful kind that I could ever invent, for it shows, by actual handling of concrete examples, what a paragraph is—that a paragraph is a subjective affair, a way in which an author shows his purpose, and that points of division are often debatable. "What reason can you give?" is the clue to acceptable paragraphing. I have seen some boys gain, in one recitation, a great advance in understanding of paragraphs from the one passage called the "The death of my uncle." Indeed I have learned much myself from that one passage; I have learned that publishers and editors have several times reparagraphed it, doubtless with good reasons, and very likely with effects that would not have offended Irving. A paragraph is not a fixed necessity; it is a variable unit.

Next in importance, so far as my experience shows, is Lesson 13, because it strikes directly at the two opposite faults which have been shown by the Exercise of Lesson 11—namely, paragraphs that are too long or too short for unity. That distinction seems in practice, however vague and unworthy it might appear to an artist, to be the most fruitful one we can make. If a student once grasps the principle of

Lesson 11 ("I wish to show an important change of topic"), and if he then learns in Lesson 13 that important changes cannot come often in one short theme, he has a good preliminary understanding. I should be quite willing to go through the fall term with those criteria, recurring to them and enforcing them; the other lessons are not so fundamental. For my own use the nine Lessons on paragraphs rank about in this order of importance: 11, 13, 12, 14, 15, 16, 41, 40, 42.

More detailed comment on the paragraph Lessons will be found in Part Two; see the section devoted to each lesson.

4. Oral composition. Oral composition is the most praised, the most feared, and the most debated subject in the curriculum. Feeling for and against it runs high. Assumptions about its value run from zero to a hundred per cent. So be wary of allowing any convictions to crystallize in your mind; wait for experience to show where the truth lies for you. No question in connection with the use of a textbook is more variously answered; none is more important to a teacher who wishes to plan wisely. Instead of presuming to give my own analysis I will offer testimonies from various sources.

(a) During the decade before 1924 oral composition has been held up with almost unanimous approval by schools of education, by principals, supervisors, and by most textbooks. Objections to oral or cautions against it have hardly been seen in the pedagogical journals. Everywhere there has been cordial approval and high hope. That is important evidence.

(b) It has been universally believed (at least I have not seen an exception in print) that oral presentation is the natural preliminary to a written form, and that oral therefore deserves more time than written in the lower grades, as a preparation for the art of writing.

(c) A book of advice for teachers of English, published in 1923, contains these two sentences near the beginning of a chapter on "Ability to Write":

"There has been a shifting of emphasis during several years until now the teaching and practice of writing have to be justified. The importance of spoken English has been more and more widely recognized."

The same author, in his next chapter, on "Ability to Speak," entitles the first paragraph "Increasing importance of speech," and says:

"The world at large has developed a new consciousness of the power of the spoken word. . . . Schools must provide for developing ability to speak."

Yet a composition textbook issued within a few months of the same time, written by a successful veteran of the public schools who has emphasized oral work, contains no reference to oral in its index and makes only a few casual references to any distinction between oral and written.

(d) There is no question that oral composition has been favored by some teachers because it does not furnish a bundle of themes to correct. Comment is unnecessary, but a little pondering is recommended.

(e) The greatest argument in favor of oral is the one given on page 338 of *Theme-Building*: "We speak much more than we write." It is contended that if we speak a thousand times as much as we write, a school should devote at least twice as much time to oral as to written themes. This may be true. Also it may be false. Consider the following parallel logic and see whether you think it bears on the question: "Since honesty is a thousand times as important as a knowledge of arithmetic, a school should assign twice as much time to honesty in its curriculum as to arithmetic." All depends on the possibility of securing extremely precious results by curricular methods.

(f) Much of the benefit derived from oral composition—in fact most of the benefit that is generally talked about—is not a matter of "composition." It is correcting of speech errors, improving voice quality, feeling at ease before an audience. Every such improvement is a priceless boon, but it is not "composition." Reflect also that priceless boons are not conferred easily. Take stock of the arduous and prolonged labor necessary to insure any lasting improvement in an ordinary pupil's diction or voice quality. Consider also how repugnant to any real boy are the vocalizing subtleties attempted by many instructors in public speaking. A writer in the *English Journal* of May, 1924 (a man who has always been in the van of forward-lookers in public-school work) says, "And I think I must include among the silly teachers the professionally trained elocutionists."

(g) A professor in a western agricultural college once asked me, when speaking of his boy's English work in the public school, "What is this oral composition? My boy says

he just has to get up and spiel awhile. I don't see what he learns." This man was not in a fault-finding mood, for he is a teacher himself and knows how student testimony is to be distrusted; he was seeking light. A whole-hearted public servant, a principal of a good high school in a western city, a man who believes in the value of oral, once told me that only one-third of his teachers had sufficient skill to avoid wasting time in handling oral themes. This man conceived that oral composition requires of a teacher much more skill than written, and that only a small percentage of teachers have, as yet, developed their technique beyond the danger-point.

(h) The teachers of France and England have not developed anything comparable to our oral themes, yet those nations presumably have a higher standard of speech than we have. This is matter for reflection.

(i) A woman who has for many years taught in school and college in a western state, expressed herself thus in the *English Journal* of December, 1923:

> Educational fashions come and go almost as quickly as short skirts and comic songs. . . . A number of years ago the subject for discussion at English conferences was the value of the oral theme. . . . Nowadays one hears comparatively little about oral composition. . . . I can see how a conscientious teacher might feel that oral composition is a lazy waste of time. . . . I have, of course, seen a class of students ready to graduate from the high school who, having had oral composition work for four years, show decided improvement in ease of manner and fluency of diction; I have never seen any marked improvement in clearness of thought or orderly arrangement of material in oral themes.

Every user of *Theme-Building* should understand that the book will be abused unless every oral assignment made from it is aimed to secure what this teacher says she has never seen—marked improvement in orderly arrangement of material. (See "Structure" in the Index.) If oral composition cannot aid in developing coherent structure, it is worse than a waste of time; it is an incitement to being slipshod.

Take the testimonies for what they are worth. They are not offered with a view to persuading you that oral work is a wrong kind of effort, but only to caution you of the ruin

that may overtake a teacher who has no suspicion of danger. If you know the answers to the doubts that are expressed, and if you wish to use half your time for oral composition, you will find that *Theme-Building* stands ready to aid you. Oral treatment is suggested somewhat more often than written; the benefits of oral are displayed; the superiority of oral is explained in two places. *Theme-Building* is written for the teacher who is sure of his ground in this subject. If any teacher has doubts and expects to depend more on writing, he need not be misled by the frequent prominence given to oral.

For cautions about the frequency of themes—that is, not assigning a composition because a suggestion for one bobs up in a book—see the first paragraph of Section 8 and see the comments on the first Theme Suggestion.

5. Written composition. Unless you belong to a small and very gifted minority of teachers who work in favorable conditions, you will find that the surest way of developing a sense of structure in composition is by relying on the written form. And all our work is vain from now on, through school and college, unless we do cultivate a sense of structure. A written theme is a record; its faults of structure can be pointed out and remedied. If an oral theme is vivid in the mind of both teacher and student, if the teacher is quick and exact and resourceful in criticizing what has been spoken, and if the student is eagerly attentive and anxious to learn how to improve—then valuable lessons in unity and coherence can be taught by an oral method. Otherwise, and for most of us most of the time, the written form is the medium in which we shall be most likely to work with economy and assurance.

If I wished to make most progress in the architecture of oral composition, I should not begin with speaking. I should first design a written plan. I should insist that no spoken theme can succeed unless it is planned as carefully as if it were to be written. My inclination would always be to start from the written plan and the written theme, to show that what is spoken must be built by the same pattern as what is written. Perhaps this would seem wrong-end-foremost to a psychologist. A teacher's only response is that, in practice, the visualized and concrete model of a written

form furnishes a guide to the oral structure. We can appeal to a model that is objective and can convince students that a guide for oral structure is the architecture with which they are familiar on paper. We can work from the written to the oral; I do not know how architecture can be derived from oral for written.

All the Suggestions try to impress the idea that there is no distinction in structure between oral and written forms. The student's chief responsibility in all work of either kind is to improve his power of building. The name of *Theme-Building* means something.

If we regard every assignment of a theme as a definite effort to improve structure, we shall not assign any topic lightly and shall not suppose that any of the miscellaneous offerings of a textbook will suit our purpose any week. We shall try to frame some program of topics, choosing from the book what suits, or (much better) finding the right topics in our own school and common life. The theme-topics given in the book are purposefully arranged, so that a teacher who had no initiative might follow them for two years, or three: there is a series of the different types of composition, running from stories through narratives of fact, description, and exposition to argument; then there is a similar series of "better themes," and a third series of "more ambitious themes." This is, in a general way, a normal kind of program for any school to follow. But every school should devise its own plans if possible and use a book to supplement them.

Section 8: The Lessons for a One-Year Course

No good textbook can be a prescription for any particular school; it is a magazine of material to supply many kinds of schools. It can be used to good advantage only by a teacher who plans to select what he most needs. The first step in preparation for the selection is to estimate the number of lessons. To begin at the beginning, without forethought, to take each lesson as it comes, to go as far as time permits, and then to stop—that is destroying a course. If some school, because of peculiar conditions, had only thirty days to spend with the book, its choice of lessons and the order of taking them would be very different from the choice and the order for a sixty-lesson course.

Estimating the number of lessons is not so simple a process as it appears to be. Suppose that some novice expected to use the book three days a week for 35 weeks; that amounts to 105 lessons. She would find only 58 "Lessons" in the table of contents, and might exclaim, "The book is hardly more than half big enough!" If you think that such a case is too ludicrous to be possible, you are not familiar with all the strange revelations that come to a textmaker. I can testify for myself that nothing in a year's work is more difficult than to estimate how much of a book I can cover in 30 or 60 or 90 days.

It is generally true in my own case, and I suppose most teachers find it so, that a set of lessons in prospect seems only a half or a third as long as when I look back on them. I always count too easily and generously, forgetting that some lessons will not be well learned and must be repeated, that a lesson which seems to be mastered this week will appear to be forgotten ten weeks hence and will have to be reviewed, that the number of days I count on is always being reduced by interruptions and interferences, that a "Lesson" in a book may occupy two or three or even five of my days if unexpected difficulties arise, that I often need to clinch a particularly useful lesson by spending extra days with added exercise. Greater than any of these causes of slowing up is the necessity (especially early in the year) of stopping to teach last year's rudiments. Very seldom do I go faster than I had expected at any point; almost invariably I am being retarded. And I have learned that going slowly is almost a sure sign that I am planning well; hurrying to keep up with a predetermined schedule never has paid me. Hence I cheerfully anticipate that what looks, at first sight, like 50 lessons in a textbook may spread over 100 or 125 days.

Perhaps you will not be allowed to go as slowly as your judgment directs. That is a second important consideration. Are you obliged to "cover ground"? Perhaps some uniform requirements for a city course oblige you to keep moving through a set of lessons, regardless of their not being mastered. Perhaps a principal or a university inspector will think better of you if you can report that you have "covered so much ground" in nine months. Take into account any such local necessity.

When you have guessed as well as you can at the number of lessons you will wish to assign in *Theme-Building* during the year, realize that the estimate is subject to change; it will help you to start right, but must not be allowed to interfere with the moves that you find you ought to make as you become better acquainted with what the class needs. If in the third week you discover some unexpected weakness that bids fair to alter your plan considerably, and if in the sixth week this alteration is three times as great as you supposed it would be, there is no reason for feeling blue. Indeed you should feel encouraged, because you are probably adapting your efforts to what the students most need. Have no fears. But look ahead to see where the changing plan is taking you. What effect will it cause in the number and type of Lessons you are to select from the book?

Suppose, to be concrete, that you are to have 5 periods of English a week for 35 weeks, that 2 periods a week are in literature, 1 period for composition, and 2 periods for *Theme-Building* assignments; and suppose that you are free to follow your own judgment in selecting the lessons. Unless the class has had exceptionally good training during the past two years or is an A section (that is, a selected lot of the best students), you might make a preliminary estimate of this sort: review in the Appendix, 10 lessons; Mismanaged Parts, 7 lessons; sentences, 15 lessons; paragraphs, 7 lessons; whole compositions, 15 lessons; unexpected losses for review, holidays, etc., 7 lessons—total 61. Don't worry about adding 9 to the total; the 9 will be needed several times over before the year is ended. Don't feel obliged to live up to every item in your list. The list is not to control you, but to keep you advised of *how the year's total is building itself* as you adjust to each discovery of weakness.

A detailed map of an illustrative course would be the laughing-stock of experienced teachers and poison for novices, because some self-distrustful beginners would adopt it instead of keeping their eyes open to their own students. It may, however, interest some teachers to see an example of the kind of selection that might be made by some teacher somewhere. Assume that he has the expectation, outlined above, of 70 book lessons.

The first recitation period might be used for reading

aloud the Prolog about Helen Keller and the Anteroom on page 3, and then 20 minutes could be allowed for writing out answers to the Test on page 4. (Save your time by requiring that each answer shall first say "Sentence" or "Not a sentence." You can then check results very quickly without reading any more of the answers than you need for sampling the kinds of ignorance in your class.) The latter part of the period could be spent in reading and discussing pages 5 and 6. Lesson 1 is assigned, and the class is dismissed.

You have taken pains to convey to the class the impression that the Test will prove rather easy for them. When you examine the papers, you find that ignorance is moderate or rather prevalent or shocking. You do not tell the class that they are miserable sinners who are to be punished, but you tell them that they are to be rescued and set on the road to freedom; you hear the recitation on *and* sentences; then you set a lesson for the next day in verbs, or verbals, or relative clauses—depending on the amount and kind of weakness revealed by the Test.

For the fourth day you do not continue the grammar labor, but explain that the regular, advanced, rhetorical work of the year is going to go forward as fast as possible; the work assigned is the study of the text of Lesson 11 and the writing out of the first part of the Exercise. You plan the fourth period so that after a discussion of the text and examples there will be time left for clearing up some hazy grammar points. Perhaps the fifth lesson will be another review in grammar; and the sixth might be Lesson 17 (with the first Exercise), which is the best general principle to guide in writing the first theme of the year. Since sandwiching of subjects is good policy, the seventh lesson might be a return to grammar.

The eighth day could well be spent with Lesson 2. Here are obvious proofs that the year's improvement in style can never be effected without grammar. Roosevelt used gerunds to make his speech different from a child's; he used infinitives in apposition—how many in the class ever did that? How many ever joined two relative clauses by *and?* How many ever employed Kipling's construction of putting between dashes such a participle as "in the zeal of youth forgetting"? How many ever built up such a set of adverb clauses as is

shown near the top of page 22? Oh, there is no make-believe about grammar; it is the stuff that better sentences are made of. Take advantage of any interest shown or any puzzlement expressed, and have, for the ninth day, a recitation on the subject, or one that will lead up to it. Be sure that the class realizes the goal—a knowledge of the three kinds of verbals, of prepositional phrases, of clauses, of appositives. Nearly all manipulating of sentences for better style is carried out with those kinds of words and constructions. A class will be in much better spirits if it sees that the objective is limited, definite, for a purpose that appears plainly in the pages that they are shortly to study.

At about this point (or a little earlier) could come Lesson 18, on constructing a story, if that is to be the type of the first theme, or Lesson 21 in preparation for a narrative. The eleventh day could be spent with Lesson 3, and the twelfth with Parts 2 and 3 of the Exercise of Lesson 11.

Sometimes students dislike the skipping about in a book; but I have never found that their objections went deep if they felt sure a teacher knew why he skipped. A composition text must contain several unrelated kinds of materials, which must be kept in distinct parts of the book for the convenience of teachers in assigning whatever is needed. It is possible in *Theme-Building* to do a minimum of skipping (if a minimum is desired) by taking the lessons of each Part in just the order in which they come. There would then be no skipping within any Part.

The teacher we have been imagining would now be under way in each line of work—Appendix review, sentences, paragraphs, whole compositions. Throughout the year his task will be to keep the four subjects abreast of each other. He will often find, after driving four-in-hand a while, that he had better let three subjects rest while he rides the fourth some distance by itself. If there are book recitations five times a week, four-in-hand work can be carried on without too long interruptions of any one subject; but if there are only two a week, interruptions between, say, two lessons in paragraphs may be so long as to interfere with consecutive teaching. In fact I should always prefer to carry on one subject at a time if it were not for one great objection: the teaching of the lessons is to be applied to the compositions,

and I have never found it feasible to concentrate on sentence lessons for six weeks while application to paragraphs and themes was left out of account.

No one would wish me to carry on my suppositions about the first twelve days to the thirteenth and the forty-seventh and the seventieth days, but there may be a few teachers who would like a conspectus of the Lessons that would naturally be chosen for such a 70-day course. The number after the dash indicates the number of days that might be used for the lesson by a good class that did not have trouble; the total number of days thus indicated is smaller than the average class, if thoroughly taught, would have to use.

APPENDIX	SENTENCES LESSON	PARAGRAPHS LESSON
verbals, 2	1-1	11-3
prepositions, 1	2-1	12-1
subordinate clauses, 4	3-1	13-2
counterfeit sentences, 3	4-1	14-1
	5-1	15-1
	6-1	16-1
	7-1	
	8-2	

WHOLE COMPOSITIONS LESSON	WORDS LESSON	MISMANAGED PARTS
17-3	30-4	10
18-2	31-1	
21-1		
22-1		
23-1		
24-2		
25-1		
26-1		
27-2		
28-2		
29-2		

The list accounts for a total of 61 lessons—quite enough for a preliminary chart of operations. If any teacher who followed the list found that he had covered that amount of ground thoroughly in 60 days, he would be peculiarly for-

tunate. Most of us would have to have two or more additional lessons in grammar review, two or three in punctuating non-restrictive modifiers, one or two in letter forms, several in review of Part II or in spelling; we should find our first estimate of lessons swollen beyond the number of recitations.

You will notice that, with the exception of Lessons 32-36, no part of the Second Division of the book is suggested for a 70-lesson course. I should not expect to go into the Second Division unless I had more than 80 recitations on the book, or perhaps more than 90. My own experience (which may not be a good guide for you) is that I do better work in limited time if I concentrate on the more concrete and less advanced lessons. I should want, before going on to the Second Division, to study Lessons 9 and 10 in sentences, Lessons 19 and 20 in whole compositions, and perhaps to spend some days with the Additions to Lessons 19, 24, 25, and 27.

If my one-year course ran to 110 lessons (which would be an exceptionally large number, considering that all theme assignments and literature lessons are an addition to the book lessons), I should choose some supplementary material from the Second Division. My own choice would be Lessons 40, 41, 42, 44, 48, and possibly 56.

Section 9: The Lessons for a Second-Year Course

It is not my private opinion, but the general consensus of experience, that a second-year course will be more effective if the early part of it is a review and a reinforcing of what was studied in the first-year course. In universities there is a growing body of opinion, corroborated in many high schools, that our principal shortcoming in the teaching of composition is the assumption that progress can be achieved by moving on into new territory—by "covering ground." It is likely that progress is a matter of learning more thoroughly about the old territory. "Conquered territory" in composition work is almost like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Nobody ever sees it. In our ambition to plot higher courses, to go on and on into journalism and verse-making, we often overlook the fact that last year's teaching is evaporating. Unless we renew it and strengthen it and solidify it, we may find ourselves flying in very thin air.

If I were to use *Theme-Building* through two consecutive years, each of 90 book lessons, I could not cover all the ground to my satisfaction. If, as will usually be the case for second-year work, I were teaching on a foundation laid by someone else, I should have to investigate the foundation, and should expect to relay almost as much of it as if I had made it myself. I have always lost by haste in going ahead to new ground; I have never regretted any amount of delay to make previous teaching secure.

So I should, in a second-year course, regard the First Division and Group 1 of the Second Division as review material, and should count myself lucky if I could escape with only ten lessons in it. And I should not dare omit a few experiments with spelling, grammar, and punctuation, to see what rudiments were still unmastered. I should find out what lessons of the First Division had been omitted and should assign those before going on to advanced work; nor should I take it for granted that I need not assign any lessons of the Second Division which had been used in the previous year.

In planning the order and number of lessons a good method would be to arrange sets in a logical order of development, each set to contain a variety of material. I should not move through the lessons seriatim, though a self-distrustful teacher could follow that order without great loss, except for Lessons 52-58.

FIRST SET
Sentences, 38
Paragraphs, 40, 41
Compositions, 43, 44
Words, 52, 53

SECOND SET
Sentences, 37
Paragraphs, 42
Compositions, 45, 47
Words, 56

THIRD SET
Sentences, 39
Compositions, 46, 48
Words, 54, 55

FOURTH SET
Compositions, 49, 50, 51
Words, 57, 58

I am conscious of how impertinent such detailed suggestions will appear to many teachers, and of how wide of the mark must be any one teacher's schedule when applied to the method of any other teacher who has his own plan of

campaign. I am not recommending any program to any teacher. The outlines of courses are offered only because the publishers frequently receive requests for them and have asked me to anticipate the wishes of these users of *Theme-Building*. The courses may, however, be worth while in one way to a teacher who makes no direct use of them: they may suggest a way of beginning operations, and thus may be, like the minister's text, something to depart from.

Section 10: Some "Best Devices" for Handling Theme Topics

In the *English Journal* and in the various leaflets issued by associations of English teachers there is increasing emphasis put on personal descriptions of "a device of mine that worked." The *Tri-State Notes*, for one example, announced in its first issue the policy of limiting itself largely to brief contributions of testimonies from teachers. In May, 1924, the *Bulletin* of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English published a selected lot of answers to a request for "best suggestions." The higher criticism of pedagogy might call the devices slight affairs, but we mere teachers find inspiration in them. The editor of the *Bulletin* has given me leave to reprint here a part of the issue that was devoted to theme topics. If every state were assembling such material and were as generous in making bounties of its riches, English problems would rapidly diminish.

In May, 1923, a questionnaire, prepared by teachers of the English Department of the Rockford High School, was sent to the teachers of English in Illinois. It aimed to collect "the best suggestions for improving our work to be gained from the experiences of the school year just closing." Answers were received from eighty-two teachers in the state. The results have been gathered together by sixteen teachers of the department in Rockford. They respectfully submit this report with the hope that it may be of service.

The first two questions concerned oral composition: 1. What is the most successful assignment you have made for oral composition this year? 2. What is the most successful device, i. e., scheme or method of procedure, you have used in oral composition this year?

Assignments dealing with the personal experiences of the pupils were frequent. (a) "The story of a memento and how it came into my possession. The memento itself was brought into class and dis-

played at the proper moment after curiosity had been aroused." (b) "Extemporaneous talks on everyday courtesy developed from actual observation." This assignment seems practical because it gives a chance for some instruction in good manners—a subject we are apt to neglect in our public school work. Many teachers have found that talks in which an object is displayed have proved popular. If the pupil can bring the article to be explained or can draw a diagram upon the board, he feels more at home.

It was delightful to see how many have found that their best oral themes were based upon the classics. We hear so much today about using personal experiences for composition subjects that we sometimes forget that the reading of a book may furnish a very real personal experience. Here are some suggestions that seem especially worth trying: "After the reading of the *Odyssey* I had a meeting to which came the gods and goddesses. They introduced themselves and told us of their origin, lives, and relationship to each other and to mankind." Another teacher used a similar assignment except that she included heroes and monsters, and the class tried to guess whom the pupil represented. The following devices encouraged reading: (a) "Pupils in a 3B class were instructed to go to the library, look around, each select a book with which he was unfamiliar, but which seemed attractive. They then spent an hour examining these and finding out as much as possible about them. They brought the books to class and talked about them. The result was that other pupils afterward took out the books for elective home reading." (b) "Talk to the class upon a book you have read at home in such a way that someone else will wish to read it too." In this case the teacher illustrated with some book so that no one would begin at the beginning and occupy the whole period with a long rehashing of the plot. Reports upon subjects assigned as a preparation for the reading of some classic were also frequently mentioned; for example, such subjects as the Crusades, the treatment of the Jews, the relation between Anglo-Saxons and Normans, preceded by the study of *Ivanhoe*. In practically every case where a topic had been successfully used, the replies seemed to indicate that the teacher had done good preparatory work—perhaps had herself shown the class how it might be done.

The question, What is the most successful device you have used in oral composition this year? brought out the fact that many of us are employing the so-called socialized recitation in various forms. Organized literary clubs were mentioned many times. A banquet scene with a toastmaster and after-dinner speeches was suggested. This similar device was described: "The members of my senior class held a reunion after twenty years. A committee had previously given each to understand what he was to be, and some came in costume. A toastmaster presided." Evidently we use dialogs between seller

and buyer often. Sometimes the teacher is the unresponsive buyer and sometimes a pupil. Here are two other schemes: (a) "Entertain your class by a pantomime in which you suggest a story with a situation, climax, denouement. Two or three may combine on this." (b) "The class dramatized stories written by themselves." All of these devices have a certain dramatic touch which will help to overcome self-consciousness. Some excellent methods have been originated to help timid pupils to appear before the class. This cure for shyness was sent: "My most successful oral composition device was my scheme to 'break the ice' for beginning freshmen. If the child confessed or showed that he was frightened, I told him that we would do some chorus work. Then I would call upon several other pupils with him, and I would have them practice good position and do relaxing exercises; this would get them to laughing and talking. When I thought the time was ripe, I would inquire, 'What was the story you were going to tell us, John?' " One teacher gave additional credit to volunteers; another started the ball rolling by presenting an oral composition herself; another wrote: "In our freshman class we worked up from reviews of fairy tales, given standing at the seat, to the point where the pupil chose a topic he thought interesting to the class. By this time each gave his talk before the class. Next we asked that from time to time the better talks be repeated before the Assembly. This device seems to be the best we have found for training toward a natural manner and getting away from so much rising inflection." More suggestions for curing the rising inflection would be helpful; this was the only time it was mentioned. The rising inflection and "and-a" are the two habits hardest to cure. Many teachers have the pupils take their seats after a certain number of "and's"; here is a scheme which is unusual: "After some preliminary work in eliminating 'and's' from oral themes, I assigned themes which were to be given without the use of more than four 'and's.' If a pupil used four 'and's' before he was through, he had to stop and write the rest of his theme on the board without using one 'and.' If he could not do this, the class helped him work over some of his sentences. This was a great aid in improving general sentence structure. In some classes we counted 'but's' and 'then's' also."

The following is a very sensible idea for the criticism of oral themes: "We made a card listing six desirable outcomes: preparation, grammar, diction, originality, delivery, group contributions. Every phase in which a pupil failed was noted by the pupil and by me, and he worked on his own errors. Those cards are much fingered and dog-eared now." Of course these devices will not be successful with all teachers. We must teach in our own way, but sometimes the mention of a device used by another will revive our own originality.

There were a number of questions concerned either directly or

indirectly with written composition. The first one was, What is the most successful assignment you have made for written composition this year? The reading done in class has evidently furnished many good assignments; for example, a newspaper account of the theft of Silas Marner's gold; a Roman newspaper, made in the shape of a scroll—such as might have appeared the morning after Caesar's assassination; a group combination of Salmagundi-up-to-date. After a season of reading, familiar essays upon habits, manners, and mannerisms have been very enlivening. Whispering, chewing gum, fads, styles, etc., have all received satirical, even caustic comments. The *Spectator Papers* also inspired this kind of composition. One teacher wrote, "A 4A class chose the most hackneyed subject they could find and attempted to 'bring it to life.' It followed a five weeks' study of the essay. The most stale subject they could think of was 'Coöperation.' They tried to do for it what some of the authors they had studied had done with similar subjects." Another said, "Apparently my best themes for the year were those written (on any subject) in imitation of the style of a model read by me to the class." . . .

Events happening in the school or in the community often prove first-rate composition subjects. The following replies indicate this: (a) "The devastating snowstorm last spring offered much first-hand material for two days' class work. There were write-ups of accidents, themes of humorous incidents, and pieces of good description. To everyone this made an appeal." (b) "All of the boys marched in a Loyalty parade. The assignment was to write about some interesting incident connected with the parade—the boys as participants, the girls as spectators." (c) "The School Board was discussing the advisability of establishing a junior college in our city. The seniors were asked to present as many arguments for or against the project as they could think of. The students interviewed various educators on the subject, and some wrote for detailed comments to cities where junior colleges are already established." The next assignment has probably been used a good many times, but to some it may be new. This is the way one teacher described it: "In the sophomore class we worked out together an outline on 'Our Home Town,' and the members of the class then worked up some most satisfactory compositions. They did considerable research, delving into the early history of the town, finding out about the present system of government, industries, etc. They did some real work, and then, too, I felt that a considerable amount of wholesome civic pride was created." Another teacher wrote that the local newspaper was glad to print some of the articles, for forgotten incidents of the early history of the town had been unearthed.

Several teachers have been successful with the writing of poetry. Here is one plan: "I gave the class a dozen first lines of poems—as

suggestive lines as I could find—and asked them to write verse using the lines as a starter. These lines seemed to facilitate the task by furnishing a meter ready made and by striking a high note of inspiration." In other classrooms the study of a particular type of poetry—for example, the ballad or the lyric—has been an inspiration to imitative effort. The magazine, *The Gleam*, containing high-school verse, is helpful for this sort of work. It is stimulating both to the writing and to the study of poetry. . . .

Freshmen, whose ideas are limited, may find plots for stories in cartoons and the illustrations of magazines; for example, the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post* remind the youngsters of some of their own Tom Sawyer escapades.

Many teachers spoke of the use of model themes. Some kept both their best and their worst from year to year and by reading them aloud or posting them upon the bulletin board created a certain ideal toward which to strive. The writer of a good theme always felt honored when he was asked to copy his composition so that his teacher might use it with future classes.

Writing for print has evidently been a strong stimulus to better composition. "Publishing a tiny paper in class," "The starting of a school paper, having it typewritten and posted in Assembly Hall," "The publication of 'The Sherwood Arrow' by a class after reading *Ivanhoe*"—these answers show our attempts to approximate the writing for print ideal. . . .

There seem to have been good chances to provide a motive for letter writing in many of the schools. The Junior Red Cross, in its efforts to promote a feeling of friendliness between us and our neighbors, has evidently done a good work for the teachers of composition, if they will avail themselves of the opportunity. One listed as her most successful piece of work the writing of some of these letters to Paris. She also mentioned receiving through this medium "a beautifully gotten-up book from a Paris school, containing paintings, sewing, photos, and letters." She spoke, also, of going with the class to see the American Exhibit at the Art Institute. After the visit "they wrote letters of appreciation to the artist they liked best. Some of them received answers to their letters." . . .

Segregated classes are evidently growing in popularity, for this method was suggested a number of times. Of course, if the classes are segregated into ability groups, the teacher of the C or D class can adapt the work to the class. The idea of a "hospital" section is evidently being tried out in a good many high schools in Illinois. One school has two sections, called Opportunity Classes, for juniors and seniors who are especially weak in some form of composition. No outside preparation is required since this is taken in addition to the regular English courses. Some of these students stay five weeks, some ten, some a whole semester or longer, depending upon

the seriousness of their errors and the rapidity with which they respond to treatment. So far as possible these sections are kept small—under twenty—so that individual attention can be given. The pupils do not resent this work. On the other hand, some have gone into the class voluntarily; and all, after they have been in for some time, feel well satisfied with what they get. Some of the teachers in answering this question gave the impression that they consider it bad psychology to put a pupil into a class like this because it makes him feel "down and out." Whether it makes him feel so or not, sometimes he needs special drill which he should have received in the eighth grade. Is it not good psychology to give him the habit of succeeding upon something so simple that he really can do it well? No doubt many failures can be salvaged by this method.

PART TWO

COMMENTS ON THE LESSONS

(In the order in which they occur in the book)

A collection of "best devices of teachers" for choosing and handling theme topics is given at the end of Part I.

For a brief description of what some teacher might do during the first twelve days of book Lessons in *Theme-Building* see Section 8 of Part I.

"Set yourself free." This Prolog to the book may seem to some students and a few teachers to be a romantic sort of appeal, a kind of sermon, and not a very practical statement of the facts of school work. It is the plain truth. A teacher who does not understand this will drudge through the year at the head of a class of drudges. The teacher who recognizes it will lead a band of seekers after freedom. The drudge who hears a command to "make a theme emphatic" will go through some motions of emphasis, and not be benefited. The seeker for freedom, hearing the same command, will say to himself, "Now I see a way to let people know that I am not a dullard"—or, since we are speaking of realities, he will say, "that I am not a dub." The two responses to the same command are as different as slavery and liberty. When the desire for freedom in self-expression is the motive of a class, instruction is the kind of rescue work that Miss Sullivan did for Helen Keller.

I know how sermon-like that sounds. I know all too well how much of any effective recitation must be occupied with drudgery, with expostulation, with whipping up the laggards, with imposing penalties on the unwilling. I know that a pretty little prolog in a book or a classroom may be the veriest hypocrisy, and that the direct preaching of it may be an empty ceremony which offends honest boys and girls. I know that in actual classrooms results are not secured by

preachments, but by hard work. The "Prolog for Every Lesson" is not to be mouthed and emotionally repeated. It is the great fact which animates all teaching of composition. If it is once understood in the hearts of the class, there will be no need of appealing to it formally. It will vivify all hard exercise and justify all strict requirements.

"Do you know what a sentence is?" In 1916 the directors of freshman English in the colleges of Indiana agreed to administer a very simple test to the entering class, to oblige each freshman to show whether he knew what a sentence is. The test was substantially like the one in *Theme-Building*—groups of words, some of which were sentences and some of which were not. Barely fifty per cent of the freshmen knew the difference. In 1919 the University of Wisconsin tried the experiment with its freshman class four weeks after matriculation. The first question was: "In the following passage underline each of the expressions which does *not* constitute a grammatically complete sentence."

His first object was to seek an interview with Mr. Brown. And accordingly, early in the morning Jim set off on his walk to the shops, where for so many years his days had been spent. Where for so long a time, his thoughts had been thought. His hopes and fears experienced. It was not a cheering feeling to remember that henceforth he was to be severed from all these familiar places. His spirits farther being hampered by the evident feelings of the majority of those who had been his fellow-workmen. As he stood in the entrance to the foundry, awaiting Mr. Brown's leisure, many of those employed in the works passed him on their return from breakfast. While, with one or two exceptions, he received no acknowledgments of former acquaintance beyond a distant nod at the utmost.

Only three per cent of the sub-freshmen could distinguish accurately between the four sentences and the four groups that are not sentences. Only thirty-five per cent of the regular freshmen could distinguish.

The shocking disclosure of ignorance was published to the schools that had certified the freshmen for college (119 public high schools and ten private secondary schools). The freshman faculty also took occasion to explain to the schools "seven points on the teaching of grammar in the high school in its relation to effectiveness in English composition." Num-

ber III was: "Direct technical instruction in English is impracticable except upon the basis of a genuine familiarity with the facts of English grammar." There can be no question of the truth of this declaration—little though it may be realized in some schools.

Do you know that conditions are better in your state than in these states that have published the facts? Do you believe that there is good reason to distrust the pronouncement of Wisconsin as to the only way to secure improvement?

That pronouncement is not a dictum that applies only to college conditions or to high-school students preparing for college. It is the fundamental truth for secondary teaching. Only a few students, gifted with an instinct for language, can ever know surely what a sentence is until they understand the grammatical nature of a sentence. They cannot achieve such an understanding until they clearly apprehend what verbs are, why infinitives and gerunds and participles are not verbs, what subjects of verbs are, what the difference is between a relative pronoun as subject and a personal pronoun as subject, what adverb clauses are, what principal clauses are, what the difference is between an adverb like *then* and a conjunction like *when,* why appositive constructions are not statements. No generalization like "expresses a complete thought" can teach what a sentence is; no appeal to pride or carefulness can teach the distinction. Until we have taught the grammar of the difference, we have taught nothing.

If the test shows that most of your class in the tenth or the eleventh year do not know what a sentence is, only one course of action will be fair to these poor untrained students —to go back to the essential rudiments and teach them. This may be heartbreaking for you, and it will make them disgruntled unless they have faith in the Prolog and the Test of the Anteroom. If you and the class have such faith, you may enter upon the review with good spirit. Be assured that your plight is not peculiar. At no stage of the present course of English in American colleges and schools is the knowledge of the sentence established. College freshmen, we have seen, have to be taught because the teaching was not done in high school; upper classes in high school have to be taught because they did not learn in the lowest year; they

were not taught in the lowest year because it was assumed that of course they had been taught such rudiments in junior high; most published courses of study for cities assume that of course this childish rudiment will be thoroughly mastered by the end of the seventh year, perhaps pretty well taught by the end of the sixth; and no sixth-year teacher can do more than make a beginning in such a long, hard subject, for she has to teach over again the elements that are scheduled for the fifth year, but that are not mastered there. In most of our city systems there is either a willingness or a necessity to certify for promotion a large percentage of pupils who do not know the rudiments of sentence structure that are nominally required for promotion. From top to bottom of our whole organization for teaching the mother tongue there is the same discouraging necessity of going back to build the foundations that were supposed to be laid years before.

It is useless to try to fix the blame for this condition. The blame must be distributed all along the line. None of us want to teach rudiments; we all prefer to teach literary appreciation and to leave the dirty work to those who labor below us. If you, too, refuse to do your share of making up past deficiencies—well, that is a matter for your own conscience and your own judgment as to what education is. Throw this pamphlet away and enjoy yourself.

If you share my opinion—at least in part—you will prescribe work in the Appendix and will not grudge the time necessary, however long it may be, to establish a knowledge of what verbals and phrases and subordinate clauses are, of what a sentence is.

"The intolerable sentence-error." For a quarter of a century I have encountered the difficult question, "Why are you so strict with students when the makers of classics indulge in sentence-errors?" I have seen professors struggling with the problem of "When is a sentence-error not an error?" For twenty years I made the mistake of putting all my teaching stress on the heinousness of the error, and made no analysis of why it is not an error. The puzzle is a very real one, and we all do harm until we know the solution. For we call sentence-errors "the baby's mistake" and then have to admit that all our best authors make sentence-errors.

I shall never forget the peace and pleasure I felt when I first saw that the error is not an error *unless it is ignorantly made*—that is, all depends on the ignorance. I print below part of an explanation that I wrote for *Tri-State English Notes* of March, 1924:

This antagonism between our minimum requirements and our literature is a peculiar puzzle. So far as I can learn, every English author except Samuel Johnson has used *which* clauses as complete sentences; our literature is dotted with appositive nouns set off as sentences; recent writers frequently make sentences out of fragments like these from Conrad: "The right accent. The capacious lung, the thundering or the tender vocal cords." Nearly all authors have made comma sentences like this one of Matthew Arnold: "We must not rest, she and they are always thinking and saying, in negative criticism, we must be creative and constructive." If Conrad's fraction and Arnold's double unit are literary customs, why are they sins in school themes? Certain high-placed advisers of secondary teachers are putting that very query to us, and are inclined to fear that we are small-minded in our taboo of the irregular sentence that is employed with increasing favor by twentieth-century authors.

One day I stumbled by accident on the full and fair reply. I was retorting to a clever theme-writer who had pleaded for a license to use the fractional and the comma sentences of literature. "Oh," I snapped out rather peevishly, "make all the sentence-errors you like—only do me the favor to label them. Just put an asterisk at the critical point and at the bottom of the page write 'Intentional.'" The young artist was delighted. His next theme contained six fractional sentences duly annotated. I said nothing. Next week his theme contained three labeled errors and two not labeled. I marked his work zero. He cheerfully acknowledged the justice of the zero.

Since that day my mind has been perfectly clear about the difference between literature and themes. The author uses sentence-errors by design to vary his style; the pupil uses them in ignorance. The comma or the period is not sinful. The only sin is in the *ignorance*. If any student can prove that he is always conscious of the form that he is using, he may have all the license that is within the bounds of good taste. But until he knows exactly what he is about, and can prove that he always knows, his ignorance is sin.

Anteroom Test

The only proper sentences are numbers 3, 6, and 12. Some detailed comment follows. 1. The noun *overcoat* is

merely modified by a *with* phrase, in which is a *that* clause; this type of sentence-error ordinarily comes from using a noun in apposition and regarding it as a separate sentence because it is so long and so important in its content. 2. This is merely a participle, *thinking,* modified by the *as* clause and having the *how* clause as its object; the *that* clause is used as a peculiar kind of adverbial modifier of *glad.* 3. A proper sentence, because all the modifiers are grouped around the principal clause, *he began.* 4. Contains a sentence-error, because the independent clause, *others indicated mice,* is set off by a mere comma. This type of sentence is frequent in literature, for an author might wish to show that the last clause is not coördinate with the first one, but is of secondary importance, coördinate only with the second clause; to use two semicolons would really misrepresent the thought. The natural ways of writing it in themes would be to use *and* before *others* or to split into two sentences at *some.* 5. A mere *which* clause. 6. Good sentence, the framework of which is *to compare might be embarrassing.* 7. Sentence-error, because there are two distinct sentences in the quoted words; there must be a period or a semicolon after *she whispered.* 8. A mere trio of infinitives—*to wake, wonder,* and *to find;* all the verbs are in subordinate clauses. 9. *Also* is not a conjunction that can be used with a comma; it is a "conjunctive adverb," like *then* and *nevertheless,* which requires a semicolon. 10. A mere pair of *where* clauses—where everything was kept moist and (where) we could no sooner hang our wash. 11. *In fact* is a connective phrase that cannot be used with a comma; it is like the adverbs *also, then,* and *however.* 12. A proper sentence, the framework of which is *you want to find.* 13. *Sometimes* is an independent adverb that requires a period or a semicolon.

LESSON 1

Lesson 1 shows the kind of difference there is between this year's work and last year's emphasis on mechanics. We are no longer in a region of absolute right and absolute wrong; we are discussing the question of *better* taste, *better* judgment. It is important that the class should understand this at the outset. They will feel a better spirit for the work if they see that it is different; for the fear that "this is the same old stuff" is a hindrance to a good attack early in the year, and the assurance that this is "new stuff" will prevent a

wrong attack. Call attention, by turning pages and dipping into various Lessons, to the fact that no grammar or spelling or punctuation appears in the body of the book.

Emphasize another point. No student (unless he is gifted with an innate sense of style) can hope to make his sentences varied and mature until he readily understands the grammar terms in which the teaching of Part I has to be done. This comes out well on page 9 and in D on page 10. More than one textbook author has called a compound verb (I *took* my gun and *set* out) a pair of coördinate clauses.

That device of using a pair of verbs for one subject is very much more important and effective than many teachers could guess. Incidentally, it is harder than most of them suspect; it will bear added comment and illustration. The sentences in Section D should be recast in class, and other similar sentences given by one student to another for altering.

When such a sentence as number 1 on page 14 is made simple, there is no need of a comma; but a comma is often proper (and sometimes decidedly preferable) if the two verbs show different times (as in sentence 2) or if an author wishes to show that in any way the verbs are not alike in their form of statement.

The Lesson explains why some *and* sentences are poor and weak forms. It will not do, however, to lay too much stress on the idea that these are flagrant errors. Some sentences from literature come perilously near to these forms. (See the discussion in the comment on Lesson 37.) Authors have at times been very free-and-easy in their use of *and* to link dissimilar clauses. So do not insist too strongly that the shifts in Sections B and C are absolutely wrong; say that they are dubious and dangerous until a writer is free of all fondness for *and*.

The devices of using passive participles and compound verbs can be made good illustrations of how indispensable grammar is for improvement in style—at least for the average student. Many teachers and most of the laymen who advise us base their theories of rhetoric on the gifted student, who has an instinct for effects, and who can go on to glory without any formal knowledge of grammar. Such were all these advisers: they did not profit by grammar, and perhaps do not now know any. Such may be a few of the members of your class. With them we have little concern in this part of our teaching—though we may feel confident that definite knowledge of grammar will do them no harm and will not be a waste of time. We must teach the ninety-five per cent who are not gifted. They will not advance without point-by-point instruction in particular devices.

Suggested Changes for the Sentences

1. And had watched it. 2. And in a few minutes was out of sight. 3. As he finally set foot on shore, we could all tell by his sigh of satisfaction that he was exhausted. 4. And that there was blood running. 5. This place was a small café, managed by. 6. Was a small, dapper youth, who, alongside Chief Gilmour, the pride of the herders, appeared insignificant. 7. While she looked in the glass, Bert still laughed.

8. The note that he begins to read aloud contains these comforting words. 9. The news of the marriage killed her (for it is hardly necessary to tell us that the news came; of course it came). Most students will prefer, and properly enough: When the news of the marriage came to her, it killed her. 10. Another picture, called "The Milkmaid," by Greuze, shows a young girl. 11. She led me . . . . told me to lie down . . . . , and ordered a servant to bring. (Most students will not realize that they are free to take such liberties, and will be more likely to make a complex sentence of this type: After she had led and told, a servant brought.) 12. As it was now about eight o'clock at night, the captain. (Discourage the nominative absolute beginning—"It now being." This is proper and somewhat common in literature, but is a construction that is almost sure to cause bungling if students cultivate it.) 13. "Now that you have had a good look at the crowd," said the old man, "if you will crawl"——. 14. Finding me more than a match for him at this game, he went on to his next customer. (An *as* or a *since* clause at the beginning is a safer model. Discourage "I being more than a match," because this is almost sure to be a clumsy way of expressing the reason.) 15. From my study of the subject I learn that there are several steps which must be taken. (The sentence could be made simple by saying "I learn of several steps to take," but this is not quite true to the writer's meaning.) 16. The first customer in his stationery shop —opened before seven—was a commuter. 17. Now that the wind has gone down again, I am. 18. My chum is always making jokes about a peculiarity of hers—being very fat. 19. Tonight, in his introductory remarks as chairman of the meeting, he will tell all his glorious thoughts. 20. When I put the case to them in that way, they at once saw my point.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THEMES, PAGE 15

No problem is so hard in the making of a composition text as the best way of offering theme assignments. If they are grouped together in one part of the book (an arrangement that would seem the most convenient), some teachers will not reach them till the middle of the year, and others will be grieved at the unbroken stretches devoted to sentences and paragraphs. If the assignments are put in at regular intervals and called lessons, some teachers will faithfully use them in that order, will assign themes to a class that ought to be reviewing rudiments, and will thus apportion the work to poor advantage. So I have "suggested" themes rather frequently, in the hope of inducing teachers to use their judgment and never to require a theme when some other sort of work needs doing.

No book can assign themes wisely to any given class. In fact I will go so far as to say that every theme ought to grow out of the interests of the class, and not out of a book. But, since a book is expected to spur invention and to exhibit alluring possibilities, I have tried to live up to that customary demand. I have suggested that themes should be written or spoken as often as possible. In *Workways* I would urge that the teacher must regard these suggestions as entirely optional. Especially at the opening of the year, when vacation rust has

gathered in brains and before there has been preparation for the more ambitious attempts in composition, there is a likelihood that no theme should be undertaken until after some review has been had and Lesson 2 has been studied. In my own experience I have found that I am prone to rush into composition too early in the fall term. I once experimented by assigning only one theme during the first month—and I am not yet sure that such an extreme program was unwise. For by the time we prepared the second theme we were responsible for most of the common decencies of mechanics and for the general needs of structure. To assign the early themes of the year without making such definite requirements is to make students suppose that theme-building is a happy-go-lucky avocation, not a real job in which they must exercise skill and conscience.

In my own classes I should not assign the first theme of the year until I had covered at least as much ground as this: 1. a day, or several days, with the Anteroom Test and the weaknesses discovered there; 2. some review of sentence-errors in the Appendix; 3. some review of subordinate clauses; 4. Lesson 2. It is likely that most schools will secure better results in less time, and will open the year with much better spirit, if they refrain from assigning a theme until Lesson 11 on paragraphs and Lesson 17 on the "straight line" have been studied.

Most of this material is, in one way, "old stuff." All in the class have been hearing for several years about paragraphing dialog, and every class trained in *Sentence and Theme* has heard about the "straight line" and the danger of "and" sentences. But the treatment in *Theme-Building* goes no farther back than to give reminders of what was learned last year, to splice this year's work firmly to it, and then to stretch forward into more advanced ways of learning. The new book is not a repetition on the old level—as will soon be apparent.

I have found that I do well to advertise "newness" at the beginning of the year. Students are made listless if the work of a new year appears to resemble last year's scenes. To cover the same ground again, to use the same part of the same book once more, to hear identical instructions—these are disheartening. Unless we show that, in the language of the Suggestions, we are making "a new effort" for "a new training," we begin discouragingly. Hence I have done what I could to impress the idea of taking a fresh hold and entering a new region of endeavor. First I have spoken of improvement in the structure of themes. This need is steadily put forward throughout the book. Explain to the class that in later Lessons they are to see planless paragraphs and compositions written for examination boards by candidates of ability who showed that they had never been taught any idea of what structure is; in their themes they appeared ignorant and even silly. Yet some of them were so bright that a few definite lessons in "straight line" and climax would have made them seem like different writers. The coming Lessons will open new possibilities for improvement. "You may be sure, in the second place, that you must apply what you learn," says the Lesson. No Lesson is a repetition of the same old gymnastic exercise; each Lesson offers a new chance for an advance that has not been made before.

MARCELLA, PAGE 17

I sinned grievously for many years by assigning such a story as this without any particular insistence on structure. Sometimes I did not offer a plan, or point out the importance of a plan, or give special directions that one purpose must be apparent, or say anything about the last sentence as the goal of all the other sentences. Of late years I have been trying to make amends for my early sin. I would earnestly recommend to all teachers that they take warning from my case and plan to avoid the reproaches of conscience when they review ten or twenty years of labor.

"Structure" need not be paraded before the class as an ugly skeleton from a rhetorical closet. The word need never be mentioned. But "What would your last words be?" is a natural flesh-and-blood query that may produce excellent structure. If a student is aiming for that final effect—that "snapper"—he will unconsciously be contriving good coherence through paragraphs.

THEME TOPICS, PAGE 18

The book has three cycles of theme suggestions: this preliminary round, a round of "better themes," and a round of "more ambitious themes." Such a glance ahead is often inspiriting to a class.

No list of topics should be considered to contain the subject that is most suitable for any student. It is only a device to set his recollection working. The best topic is to be found in his own experience.

LESSON 2

Here is detailed proof of the need of grammar for the average student if he is to improve his sentences. It may well be that Roosevelt and Kipling and London did not learn their art by any such textbook method of analyzing sentence structure, but their instincts were always observing, even if subconsciously, the facts of syntax in literature; they were imitating one after another these devices of grammar, even if they knew no grammatical names.

It may be well to show the class a list of the sentence forms that we are learning to avoid in Part I, letting them see how definite and limited is the set of taboos.

Not too many compound sentences.
Not too many short simple sentences.
Not too many sentences that begin with the subject and verb.

Show the class that Lessons 1-6 are all about avoiding compound sentences; that if any simple sentence contains one subject with two verbs, or an appositive, or if it begins with a preposition, it is not likely to seem childishly short. Show the Index entries, "Subject and verb first," "Modifiers begin with," and make it clear that a few of these tried and tested recipes for sentence-improvement are carried through the book and taught in a variety of connections.

It is remarkable how few students ever use an appositive, and how refreshing an appositive is in high-school composition. The Index, under "Appositives," shows how the book keeps urging this construction.

The ways of varying shown on page 21 are not the least difficult or artificial for a student who knows some grammar, yet it is the rare student who ever uses them. A sentence on the model of Kipling's, even if it is not nearly so involved and does not contain one felicity of diction, would stand out as a thing of beauty on the average page of school composition.

It would seem to me wrong to require the memorizing of the list on page 22—I couldn't recite it myself; but every device in it should be understood, and any student should be able to invent an illustrative sentence when called on. Reciting glibly on what constructions to use may be a worthless process; *performing the act* of using a given construction will amount to something.

That comment on recitation method brings up the whole matter of "How would you handle the text in recitation?" No query is made more often when teachers talk together or is more anxiously asked by a novice. My own answer is unwelcome to many teachers, but is the only one I could ever find for my own guidance. I rely on a written test. The principal advantage of a written test is that it teaches students how to prepare their lessons. The reason for my faith appears in this paragraph from *What Is English?** page 239:

> In my first year's work I got in a hopeless bog with a volume of poems. The class seemed to know less every recitation. The simplest outstanding facts escaped them. One day I announced that the next lesson would be a very short review; that there would be a five-minute test in which they must show definite knowledge, expressed without the wriggling and looking for help that made oral recitation so valueless; and that I should then devote the rest of the hour to reading aloud, line by line, with comments and questions. I was not thinking of the test, but of the chance to force some comprehension into their brains. And lo! a miracle. They studied differently. Somehow that thought that they were to be left alone in a silent test period, forced to show that they knew something or nothing —that made a difference. What they had floundered in they soon learned to make a path through. The written test is a great help for composition: it leaves the teacher more time for reading aloud; it relieves him of the distraction of keeping a record of oral recitation. But more than all these combined is the training it gives in reading attentively. The same principle may be applied if a class finds any text hard to understand. Allow five minutes or so for a careful reading of a page in class, announcing that at the end of the time you will assign a topic for a test. When attention is thus concentrated, pupils over-

* A manual on all phases of teaching English; Scott, Foresman and Company.

come hard passages with an ease that is very enlightening. Explain the principle: That kind of concentration on each page, as if for a test, does twice as much in half the time.

If a student can give specific answers, however brief, about two points in the Lesson, he has learned to study; and that is education. If a teacher will read the papers quickly, read only once, and decide on the grade without worrying and debating, he will find that a daily written test is not much of an added burden, and that it brings satisfaction. That is a boon.

A good type of test is to ask about one of the examples in the Lesson—for example: "Name two of the appositives that Roosevelt used." "Tell in one sentence how Kipling used a participle." "Give a sentence which shows a good use of *nor*." If a student writes for five minutes expatiating on the blessedness of appositives, he does not prove that he has learned anything worth while; if he can say, "Roosevelt used *to preach* in apposition with *to preach*," he indicates that the whole lesson has been assimilated.

The sentences of the Exercise are from Poe's *Gold Bug*. One set of possibilities for altering them is as follows: 1. Using as a center a second peg driven at this spot, we drew a circle about four feet in diameter. 2. As soon as Legrand had taken a spade and given one to Jupiter and one to me, we set to digging as fast as possible. 3. At nightfall I felt much fatigued and would most gladly have declined the work. 4. How picturesque a group we composed and how strange and suspicious. 5. Little was said during two hours of steady digging. 6. The yelping of a dog, exceedingly interested in our proceedings, was our chief embarrassment. 7. He at length became so very noisy that we were afraid. 8. And then returned. 9. A depth of five feet, without discovering signs of any treasure. 10. After the general pause that followed I began to hope. 11. And recommenced. 12. And now slightly enlarged. 13. As nothing yet appeared, Legrand at length climbed. 14. While Jupiter was gathering up his tools, we turned. 15. After we had taken . . . . , Legrand strode. 16. And fell upon his knees. 17. Said Legrand, hissing out the words. 18. And placed his hand upon his *right* organ of vision, roaring, "Oh." 19. Yelled Legrand, executing a series. 20. Because the game's not yet up. (The only natural way of carrying out Legrand's way of talking would be to use a semicolon or a period after Legrand.)

LESSON 3

A novice teacher would wonder why a textbook should be so excited about *so*; a teacher of twenty years' experience will find that the comparisons with boll-weevils and opium are very mild and short of the truth. The reason for the excitement is not simply the importance of rooting out one particular bad habit, beneficial as that process is. The fact is that a student who learns to avoid *so* has to overcome his whole heedless attitude of mind. He must make a mental revolution. When we teachers talk about *so*, we are taking hold of a symptom and dwell-

ing on it as if it were the whole affliction. Concentrating attention on the one symptom is good tactics, for it makes our work concrete and shows the student, in a humorous and unmistakable way, what slavery he is in. If the bonds of *so* can be broken, a wide avenue to freedom lies before him.

For a test I should avoid any invitation to a general sermon on the evils of *so*. I should ask some such question as "What is said about the use of a semicolon?" "How can *so* be used as an adverb?" "How can *as* be used for avoiding *so*?" Students, like the rest of us, are in love with vague moralizing; their minds should be directed to specific, concrete, usable facts.

At the top of page 27 is the motive—"if you do not wish to be an addict"—which was introduced on page 19—"if you wish not to be a slave to *and*." It will be hard to press this idea of self-help too far. It is the basis of all teaching that endures and fructifies. "I can show you how to be free, but being free is a matter of your own desire and will-power; the battle is your own; no teacher can fight it for you."

The caution at the head of the Exercise is directed mainly at the *as* or *since* clause at the beginning of a sentence. Such a clause is apt to sound stiff and pedantic, and it is likely to become habitual. It is needed only occasionally for variety.

Examples of revised sentences: 1. As I was . . . . , you can imagine. 2. The night was so warm that Jimmy took. 3. We so disguised ourselves by pulling our caps low down and turning up our collars that no one recognized. 4. One man, because he kept rising, was asked to leave. 5. We tried to arrange to sit together. 6. The farmers who continue . . . . are not keeping up. 7. Since I could not smell . . . . , I was sure. 8. . . . . during the first quarter, to wear him out. 9. Finding as he grew older that . . . . , he swore off. 10. This storekeeper was so fond of looking . . . . that he told us. 11. Thinking that . . . . , we kept merrily on. 12. . . . . were of such a peculiar deep purple color which shimmered under the glaze that Lucy was. 13. If he was a good enough musician to play with the quartette every night, I should think he was good enough for a school orchestra. 14. There was a whole quarter of an hour to spare; what was her hurry? 15. Because of the fact that the American League team . . . . the crowds have been small. 16. Because you have been pretty generous to me, I'll give. 17. By the time the fourth man asked . . . , I felt like swinging on him. 18. I didn't suppose, after being in the water several times with the bathing-suit, that it could possibly shrink any more. 19. Why should you want your fur coat if we are going to be taken in a closed car? 20. It was the second of November, a clear, frosty morning. Imagine my astonishment, then, to see a rose.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THEMES, PAGE 31

Here is the third occurrence in twelve pages of the urging that "you must do the work." A fourth case is at the top of page 33—"forbid yourself to use *so*." A textbook is not allowed to repeat the

adjuration very often, because critics would then call it "windy" and repetitious. But a teacher should never be weary of repeating it. A student who "just talks awhile" is damaging himself.

The conversation reported on pages 31 and 32 took place in a Chicago club and was exactly as represented, except that the "journalist" was the author of *Theme-Building.* I did not bring up the subject of composition; the two men of affairs brought it up, as they so frequently do nowadays. To me their testimony came as a providential portent, for I was just then completing the first edition of *Theme-Building;* and I inserted it as "A Prolog for Every Lesson." Such testimony can be secured from professional or business men in your city. They are peculiarly persuasive to the minds of boys. Use them. For samples of how the motive is frequently appealed to in *Theme-Building* see the Index, "Business," "Real life," and "Composition as freedom."

No "Suggestions for Themes" are ever more than the merest suggestions; they should never be used because they are encountered in the passages from lesson to lesson. Nor should an assignment be oral because the book says oral, or written because the book says written. It should be taken at another time, or not taken at all, or be made with the tongue or the pen, according to the teacher's judgment. In case of doubt always omit a "Suggestion."

But in this particular case the message is a vital one and should be conveyed to the class somehow at some time. It could be dramatized by having three students impersonate the characters and read the conversation aloud. The report of the conversation (only a page and a quarter) could be assigned in connection with some other lesson, and a test given on "Why the engineer lost his contract."

A rather amusing, but thoroughly valid, example of how necessary pictures are nowadays is furnished by this clipping from a newspaper of the spring of 1924:

> Washington, D. C.—A moving picture exhibition showing the Chicago drainage canal and public works operated in connection with it, was presented to the house committee on rivers and harbors today, by Robert I. Randolph, vice president of the Chicago Association of Commerce.
>
> Mr. Randolph resorted to the use of moving pictures as a means of demonstrating just what Chicago had accomplished by the expenditure of $30,000,000 to provide an efficient system for the disposal and dilution of sewage emptying into the Mississippi river through the channels of the local drainage canal and the Illinois river.

The title, "A Picture in Spoken Words," suggests that the "four forms of discourse" are going to be featured in the theme assignments of *Theme-Building.* In one way that is true: the Lessons of Part III and the three cycles of Theme Suggestions are entitled Description, Exposition, etc. But this is only an outward form for convenience. For a discussion of *purpose* as the aim in using the old names of types see the comment on Lesson 21.

LESSON 4

It might appear more logical to define compound sentences at the beginning of Lesson 1, and so announce in advance what general principle is going to be applied. But our human mind is never taught to best advantage in that way. We need to see certain facts and, after the facts are understood, to have them put together as a generalization. Our adult brains work exactly that way with any material that is new to us. Our logical summarizings in advance appear helpful to us only because we are already familiar with the details. Hence I should not spend time at this point with the abstraction of compound sentence, unless the class is already acquainted with it. What needs attention is the fact about *but:* it is another conjunction like *and;* it is an enemy in much the same way, though not nearly so powerful. The three opening paragraphs of the Lesson are useful as a beginning of a generalization, as preliminary notice of it; but they deserve no more stress.

To distinguish between a strictly accurate use of *but* and a use that hardly gives a contrast is difficult. You will be surprised, if you examine a few dozen *buts* in a piece of literature that is not written by a very precise author, to find that we must not go very far in insisting on a clean-cut contrast. Say as much to the class, else you will find yourself in opposition to the facts in our classics. Yet it remains true that a student will train himself better if he regularly tries to use *but* for a definite opposition of ideas. The Exercise is not a comparison with literature, but is training in usual good policy.

The happy mean between hair-splitting and careless indifference in teaching seems to be this: If you can make out any kind of contrast—even a rather doubtful one—don't quibble; don't accuse an author of wrong-doing. If you can show definitely that no contrast can be made out, consider that *but* is "mysterious."

Students are often amused, with beneficial results, at the sentences about *yet* and *however* on page 36. *However* is not, in itself or as used in literature, a pompous word; it has a pompous effect when used frequently in high-school writing. Why our young people like it and never think of *yet* has always been a source of amazement to me. I have tried to bring boys to share my curiosity.

Comments on the Exercise

The six meaningless *buts* are in sentences 2, 5, 6, 11, 14, and 19. Possible revisions: 1. Though she had left the window hastily, she was walking very slowly by the time she reached the hall. 2. By the time a lot of other dogs had joined in the chase, all the barking . . . . (The *but* is really used in place of *and.*) 3. Mousie, who was usually a gentle creature, had fire in her eye today. 4. Use *yet* for *but.* 5. After they had been in love for many years, when he was over thirty-five years old, they were finally married. (The contrast in the writer's mind was that "they had postponed a long while, but were finally married"; his words made the contrast appear to be between being in love and being married.) 6. By six o'clock, after we had been walking up and down the block for half an hour, the streets were almost empty.

(There is no contrast between walking half an hour and the emptiness of the streets.) 7. In spite of our being so sure of the honesty of his motives, we have to admit. 8. Though this custom . . . ., it is serious. 9. Use *yet* for *but*. 10. Although he talks . . . ., yet I am sure. 11. Now, as it grew rapidly darker, the water lapped gently. (There is no contrast between the growing darkness and the lapping of the water—unless darkness usually makes water rougher.) 12. This might be a good place to use *nevertheless* with a semicolon before it. 13. Use *yet* for *but*. 14. I'm tired of so many dances. I'll tell you how we can avoid any more dancing—we can say, etc. (The contrast in the writer's mind was "There is no good reason why I should not keep on dancing, but I can pretend that there is a reason.") 15. Mr. Belmont, though he glared and seemed foiled as he turned away, had the look of a man who. (This way of placing the *though* clause is a variation that seldom occurs to students.) 16. I couldn't see much pleasure in Sam's idea of pretending that we were, etc. 17. Instead of *but* and a comma use a semicolon without any conjunction; the contrast will be stronger. 18. Since my visit to the Senate I have had to change my notion that senators are. 19. Bending her head to the driving wind, which beat the sleet into her face, she hurried around the corner. (There is no contrast between the bending of her head and the fact that there was sleet in the air; indeed that is the very reason why she bent her head.) 20. Although the theater may lose . . . ., yet it will gain.

THE SLEEPING VOLCANO, PAGE 38

Every picture should be regarded as a bit of material that might come in handy some time—provided no local topic is at hand. And it should be thought of as an invitation to go on a hunt for other topics. The book will be abused if a picture is regarded as a notice that means "At this point make a theme on Popocatepetl."

If the topic is used, the greatest requisite in assigning a theme would be to demand that some one definite purpose be carried out. Readers of entrance examinations in English are continually wondering why candidates do not notice the topic set, why they write without defining to themselves any particular purpose. To tell a class to "write something about the volcano" is to invite them to injure their minds. "What one topic would you choose?" "Are you going to invent a romance or describe this particular mountain or explain what a volcano is?" "What one kind of effect are you aiming at?" "What is your plan, and where is your goal?" Such are the questions that lead to good structure.

LESSON 5

There are several superstitions about certain small points of syntax which are firmly held by some teachers—for example, that a preposition should never come at the end of a sentence. Though you show them the examples of how Shakespeare and Lamb and all the rest often closed sentences with prepositions, they continue to feel that all makers of classics have violated a kind of moral law which is superior to the facts of usage. One of the superstitions is that a coördinating

conjunction should not begin a sentence. It flourishes everywhere despite the fact that Macaulay in the *Essay on Johnson* began four dozen sentences with *but*, a dozen with *yet*, and other dozens with *and*, *for*, and *nor*.

Another belief about conjunctions which seems to me hardly more than a superstition is that we can always tell precisely whether a connective is subordinating or coördinating. The greatest grammarian of English, Mätzner, confessed that the distinction was too subtle for him in the case of *for*. I quote two paragraphs from the *Pilot Book* bearing on this point:

> The fact of our language—never hinted at in the grammars—is that there is no possible way of drawing a line between coördinating and subordinating conjunctions. In fact—prepare for a pleasant surprise—the distinction is of no consequence to us teachers. What we, as practical workmen, need to know is that if a conjunction means "but" it must have a comma before it, that *so* and *for* must at least have a comma before them. So glide over the discussions that might arise about the first paragraph of the lesson. It is inserted to help classes in which much is made of the classification of conjunctions, and to help teachers who have supposed that the classification had something to do with punctuation.
>
> (There is a way of distinguishing the two kinds of conjunctions, provided we abandon the standard definition; it is an analysis for which I am indebted to Mr. Henry C. Edgar of the Hotchkiss School: "If a conjunction can stand first in the sentence, it is subordinating; if it cannot stand there and refer to what follows, it is coördinating." For example, we can begin a sentence with an *as* or a *because*, but we cannot begin with a *for* clause that applies to what follows; hence *as* and *because* are subordinating; *for* is coördinating.)

The other connecting words in compound sentences (like *however, still, nevertheless, therefore,* etc.) are not grammatical conjunctions, but are adverbs, before which a semicolon must be used. See the Appendix, pages 493 and 509, and compare the emphasis put on this distinction in *Sentence and Theme*. *So* is not recognized as a conjunction by the older dictionaries, and many schools require that a semicolon shall always be used before it. *For* may often be called subordinating, if its meaning is not to be distinguished from *because; while* is regarded as subordinating. The correlatives like *either . . . . or* are difficult to use properly for coördinate clauses and are not usual in school writing. They are treated on page 497.

One set of revisions: 1. In spite of the fact that the score was against us . . . ., still we felt. (*In spite of the score's being* is eminently correct according to the textbook rules, but it would not find much favor with American makers of literature, and none whatever in England. *In spite of the score being* is the natural and proper idiom. See *Sentence and Theme, Revised,* page 376.) 2. As the window

was . . . ., I was. 3. If you do not . . . ., you will suffer. 4. The reason why the gruff guard suddenly grew so polite may have been that. 5. There was no sign that the bait had been touched or that the rats had been near the trap. 6. I decided to close the window and shut out the unbearable noise from the road. 7. Begin with *though I was* 8. I am going to hide myself for a few days in the home of a friend, a camp at the very end of the cañon. 9. Why do you think it is good economy to buy these cheap stockings that, you know by experience, will lose their luster after they are laundered? 10. When we reached the rear of the train, we saw a thrilling sight—the engine of the second section, which had stopped within a yard of our observation platform. 11. To me, who had been paying no attention, the question didn't mean anything. 12. In spite of the cry from every part of the country for really fine pictures, no owner of a theater wants to show them without assurance of their popularity. (That model of a simple sentence is not admirable, but it is a good exhibit of possibilities. A complex sentence containing an appositive is this: No owner of a theater wants to show the really fine pictures—the sort for which there is a cry from every part of the country—unless he is sure they will be popular.) 13. It was a well-displayed advertisement, one that had caught. 14. Mr. Keeble, though he had hardly any knowledge of horse-racing, always took pride. 15. You have two options: to give Phyllis . . . . or to sell your own share. 16. He will be so afraid to tell . . . . that you can feel. 17. The kind of handbrush that I want seems hard to find—one that won't lose. 18. Please don't continue this discussion any longer, because I shall not lend. (If this sentence, with a *because* clause, is accepted as complex, and then if the *for* in number 19 is said to make a compound sentence, students have a grievance. Put yourself on their side. The distinction is a pure technicality, but it is generally agreed by grammarians that *for* is to be called coördinating. And there is a big difference: we may shift a *because* clause to the beginning of a sentence, but we cannot shift a *for* clause.) 19. Lottie—sure that she had hidden the bagful of nickels in some place that she couldn't remember—kept wondering about it. 20. I can assure you that these spark-plugs, costing only a trifle more, are worth the difference.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 45

If a student feels no more impetus to describe than a school requirement to make a picture, he will not improve. If he can believe that making a picture is a necessary part of successful advertising or explaining or persuading, he will feel a very different kind of dignity about this task.

Improvement comes by "noticing why some themes fail and some succeed." (See the discussion about criticizing stories in the comment on Lesson 43.) Such noticing is criticism. We all have an unfortunate distrust of criticism, partly because it reminds us of fault-finding and partly because it does not seem "constructive." But it is the key to all success in cultivating style. People who do well in composition are those who forever notice what authors do and how amateurs fail. They are criticizing with a view to improvement.

LESSON 6

"Unless you are somewhat of an artist" has been a useful formula to me. It keeps me on the side of literary models; it prevents any forward student from saying to me, "Ah, ha, but see what an author did." It also puts a contentious student on the defensive; I have not forbidden him anything, but have required him to claim that he is somewhat of an artist before he can plead a right to do what the artists do. He does not like to put forward such a claim.

A two-conjunction sentence will not sound unpleasant to the average student, and a three-conjunction sentence will sound unpleasant. So I find it profitable to work back from a form on which we agree to one about which he is dubious.

The use of the semicolon (bottom of page 47) is not difficult and is a godsend to a student who learns it. The advice on page 48 (to subordinate ideas) will go much farther and is more generally useful.

The five sentences that lend themselves best to the use of a semicolon are 1, 4, 5, 8, and 10. Possible revisions: 1. Use a semicolon before *but*. 2. Though the horse was now so very old that he wasn't of any use on the farm, still they kept. 3. Writing one composition a week would have been a rather difficult task if I had not been allowed over Sunday for it. 4. Use semicolon before *but*; for *so* use *and so*. 5. Use semicolon before *but*. 6. Since the owner made no effort to stop the parrot's confounded din, I moved. 7. Not knowing of any better way to kill time, I wandered into a movie theater—only to find that there was no vacant seat. 8. Use semicolon before *so*. 9. I can't even offer you my own bed for the night, because someone has stolen the only one I have—a cot. 10. Use semicolon before *but*. 11. Herman, who was afraid of her and didn't want to start any trouble, kept very still. 12. Because the hay for the animals was getting low, we decided, after we had been imprisoned for three days, to try to break. 13. Contains a hall, to the right of which is a living-room, and to the left of which are stairs. 14. These immigrants kept the pair of canaries in the cage so carefully covered up that I had no chance. 15. Since I had worked hard most of the winter and thought there was no need of keeping up the effort when spring came, I relaxed.

LESSON 7

I have always feared to make much use of the formidable expression "subordination" in classroom talk, for it sounds like a mystic process. The word serves well in a lesson title and in the recitation on this assignment; it is a good word to advertise an idea. But for producing results week after week I rely on the familiar slogans, "Begin with a modifier," "Use complex sentences," "Drop that *and*."

Be sure that every student sees the point of the second paragraph on page 51: "The result may not be a good model to imitate." Such a prolonged process and such a very compressed sentence are not models. They show, in an exaggerated way, what the possibilities always are. It is easy to use one or two of the devices in a sentence.

Emphasize also the statement on page 52 about *from Hongkong*, and

the oft-repeated invitation to use two verbs with one subject, and the advice about appositives. Repetition is the mother of good teaching. Unless we recur often to these specially useful devices, we shall not cause them to grow in composition.

A set of simple sentences: 1. Ever since getting out of bed, three hours ago, I've been trying to reach Cynthia. 2. Pure blue—the color of the flower called a "periwinkle." 3. Before long we shall have to sell this pair of andirons, and perhaps some of the chairs too. 4. Of course my liking for Uncle Jake is no sign of my liking all the work on his farm. 5. On account of my mother's nervousness this spring we are going to take a cottage at Dugmore, two miles from the trolley line. 6. My job, really a very hard one, pays pretty well now because of two increases in salary since January. 7. Omit *and that is.* 8. There really seemed to be good reason for his hope of advancing quickly from his clerk's position. 9. To the gentle Mr. Weymouth, brought up in every luxury, this room seemed. 10. The small brick building next to the big cement store was occupied by the peculiar newspaper of Horn Gulch. 11. The terror-stricken youths dared not do anything, for fear of waking their undesirable guest. 12. After leaving Father's lodge up there somewhere and growing bewildered I had to follow. 13. From the windows of our home down by the seashore—a gray house with green trimmings—we have a fine view of the sea. 14. An examination through my telescope immediately proved that it was a very large python. 15. Burning your hand on the hot hood in trying to unscrew the cap makes you want to swear.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 56

Many other examples of the need of good explanation will appeal to the class. We should all like to know about the general principles of radio, but who tells us in plain terms how sound is converted to electric waves and back again? All manufacturers and scientists and managers covet the ability to explain clearly.

So far as possible the topics chosen for such a preliminary effort at exposition should not veer to mere description of the steps of a process (like *then* and *then* and *then* in making a cake); nor should they degenerate into a narrative (like my visit to a brick-yard). An effort should be made in every case to explain some reason that we have learned about, but that our audience does not understand.

LESSON 8

Ask the class why they suppose the word *previous* occurs three times in the first sentence. If they discover that the monotony of it emphasizes the unpleasant monotony of uniform sentences, they will have a useful hint about the difference between aimless repetition and repetition for emphasis.

In spite of all a book can say, and in spite of a teacher's stress through the first seven Lessons, many students will come to class with

the impression that a short sentence is "bad." Of course a short sentence is good. A composition which contained no short sentence would be monotonous and artificial. So call special attention to the word "uniformly" in the Wisconsin announcement; if every sentence in a series is short, monotony exists; monotony is the crime.

A novice teacher (and some directors of education who have not been teachers) might wonder why page 59 repeats what has been said in recent Lessons, summarizing again what has been previously summarized. The fact is that the amount of repetition in the book is only a slight indication of the amount that must be made in class throughout the year if the principles are to take root in young minds and produce better sentences from lips and pens. The difficulty is not that students are slow or indifferent, for they will recite well enough about the principles; they know the precepts. The difficulty is that we are attempting to break up fixed habits of a lifetime and to create new habits. To break up an old habit is a herculean feat; to establish a new one requires endless patience. No human mind could imagine those two truths, for they pass the understanding of even experienced teachers who have learned them. When we try to change sentence forms, we are altering a whole process of mentality—a labor as prolonged as it is wholesome. Don't be deceived by the fewness and simplicity of the devices for avoiding monotony. They are a revolution of the intellect. They require repetition.

It is true—and few students will ever notice the fact without instruction—that an occasional direct quotation or command or question brightens a whole page of a theme (page 60). It is equally true that the various efforts to lengthen sentences and subordinate ideas and introduce novel types of sentences will result in artificiality in the style of a student who is over-conscientious or who expects to achieve variety by merely following recipes. Sluggish students are in no danger of this kind, but the active and eager ones need the caution at the bottom of page 60. Especially in the Exercise a teacher will have a chance to warn students who are overdoing and to approve of the recasting that has not gone too far, but is smooth and natural. For example, one short sentence in number II would be an artistic touch, though it happened that the author, whose thoughts were on his whole page of sentences, did not make a short one in this group.

I. The fire that we had used for a marshmallow-roast that afternoon was still going. Around the live coals of this we four crowded until we were very hot. Then we ran to a high rock, stood in line, waiting for a large wave, and dived in. By the end of half an hour of swimming we were cold again. So back to the fire we went.

II. The author, Archibald Rutledge, wrote the series thus in *Tom and I on the Old Plantation:*

> All of us knew the history of the table; and on several occasions my brother and I had pleaded in vain for permission to go in search of it. I think the reason for the refusal was that there lived at Bear Wallow a negro named

West McConnor, who was a thorough desperado. He was a hunter and woodsman famous over three counties—a wild and ranging spirit, who was suspected of all kinds of lawlessness, and at whose door could be laid the evidence of three murders. Knowing all these facts, we had become rather reconciled to not going up the river, and were surprised when father himself suggested it.

III. Scott's sentences, at the end of Chapter V of *The Heart of Midlothian*, are as follows:

They eagerly relieved each other at the labor of assailing the Tolbooth door; yet such was its strength that it still defied their efforts. At length a voice was heard to pronounce the words: "Try it with fire." The rioters, with a unanimous shout, called for combustibles, and as all their wishes seemed to be instantly supplied, they were soon in possession of two or three empty tar-barrels. A huge, red-glaring bonfire soon arose close to the door of the prison, sending up a tall column of smoke and flame against its antique turrets and strongly grated windows, and illuminating the ferocious faces and wild gestures of the rioters who surrounded the place, as well as the pale and anxious groups of those who, from windows in the vicinage, watched the progress of this alarming scene. The mob fed the fire with whatever they could find fit for the purpose. The flames roared and crackled among the heaps of nourishment piled on the fire, and a terrible shout soon announced that the door had kindled and was in the act of being destroyed. The fire was suffered to decay, but, long ere it was extinguished, the most forward of the rioters rushed, in their impatience, one after another, over its yet smoldering remains. Thick showers of sparkles rose high in the air, as man after man bounded over the glowing embers and disturbed them in their passage. It was now obvious to Butler, and all others who were present, that the rioters would be instantly in possession of their victim, and have it in their power to work their pleasure upon him, whatever that might be.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THEMES, PAGE 63

This idea will seem rather playful to most students, but will, in fact, give a kind of evidence that has been very useful to me in my own work. It will show that some of the best theme-writers produce excellent results at the first draft and do not need to revise. The old rhetorical theory of careful polishing and rewriting is not true for many students and many authors. It is known that Thackeray and George Eliot wrote their most powerful scenes at top speed and never attempted to improve, when their blood had grown cold, upon what was

created when minds were hot with purpose. That fact does not prove that students should not make a second draft. But neither does Gray's seven-year polishing prove that they should write a third draft if they would attain excellence. The fact is that we know very little about the best advice to give students on outlining and revising. We tell them to foresee and make a detailed plan in advance; then we find that some admirable theme was begun with a certain plan, which was altered completely during the making of the second paragraph, and which shaped itself so quickly, and without contrivance, that the writer would actually have interfered with his mind if he had stopped to alter his preconceived outline.

Testimony about "how my mind made this essay" has never been given us by professionals, except in bits and doubtfully. Even in R. W. Brown's *The Writer's Art,* a compilation of all such evidence as he could gather, there is little revelation of how authors have gone to work. And even that little must be taken with allowances, because authors are often poor analyzers of their own processes—witness Wordsworth and Frost. Such analysis is difficult, and we must bear this in mind when we assign the topic. We should also bear in mind that authors have not been willing to display to a curious world the odd maneuvers, the blank moments, the inspirations that came from no logic, the makeshifts by which they carried out a course that they had not anticipated.

The remarks about authors do not indicate that class discussion should turn on what professionals have done, but show how unknown and interesting a subject we are approaching when we try to tell "how my mind makes a theme." Good student writers are authors. Their processes in writing verse or story are fundamentally the same as the operations of the makers of classics—not in any sense of "let's play that," but actually. What these school authors have to tell us is of the highest interest, and they have never been solicited to tell what they know. Such inquiry as I have made of boys shows that the best writers seldom care to make an outline in advance. They conform to my requirements by making up the outline after they are through writing! If I, in my zeal for ancient suppositions, should tell them they were wrong, should adjure them to follow the wisdom of all the textbooks, I should be foolish. The part of sound sense is to try to learn from them how their minds work when they make themes. I had rather be in line with these facts than with all the theory that has been written since Aristotle.

It is an alluring subject; to me it is exciting. I should guess that before long some teacher will gather a bundle of evidence from students, digest and compile it, contribute it to the *English Journal,* and startle the school world into noticing what the facts are. It is more than likely that by 1950 all our textbook method of prevision and outlines and topic sentences will be considered scholastic lumber, fit only for a bonfire.

I have found that boys like to teach me something about composition, instead of sitting forever receptive to my platitudes about how they ought to work. I believe that in pedagogic circles this attitude toward students is called "socializing." Perhaps "project" is the right term.

LESSON 9

No student will write well until he has learned to link sentences carefully. In that sense this Lesson is important. In Part I of *Workways* I have called it much less important than any of the first eight Lessons because it is less elementary, less necessary in laying foundations. All depends on the advancement of the student. If a class is floundering in sentence-improvement, it should not be carried into Lesson 9; if an A section is facile with sentences, it should be held to a high standard of coherence between sentences after studying Lesson 9. A plan of using Lesson 16 before Lesson 9 is given in the comment on Lesson 16.

The key to all coherence in passing from sentence to sentence is given at the bottom of page 65, though the illustration is, for the sake of emphasis, a paragraph transition. "What have I now made a reader think about?" is the question an author instinctively asks himself as he finishes each sentence. To ask the question is to be alive to the right way of beginning the next one. No formula will suffice. If a class is taught that there is virtue in link words, students will fall in love with *however* and *moreover* and *nevertheless.* All link words will come naturally enough to the page if a writer is thinking of transferring a reader. But if he is thinking of using link words, he will put artificial impediments in the way of a reader. I have learned to dread the mention of link words in class, so greedily do students fasten on them and so blindly do they trust them.

Just as students are prone to think a Lesson has told them that "all compound sentences are bad," so they are likely to gather the idea that "there should always be transition words between sentences." Here is another appearance of the general principle that we want perpetual variety; we like some beginnings to be abrupt. The meaning of the Lesson might be more apparent if the title were put negatively: "Don't be careless when you pass from one sentence to the next." There is no commandment to use transfer words. We are told to notice what we have said and to be always mindful of a reader's convenience—"to be as considerate of your hearers or readers as Goldsmith was."

The Exercise could be written thus:

1. The conversation around the fireplace. 2. "Entered into conversation," mentioning the Harrison campaign. 3. Describing incidents of "that memorable campaign." 4. "Incidents" are correct, but friend's age questioned. 5. Friend is "old" enough to remember. 6. Question of "how old?"; answer "Born in 1847." 7. Dispute about remembering "birthday." 8. Campaign had been "in 1840." 9. Friend's "historical knowledge" (i. e., of the correctness of the date of 1840) causes him to be at a loss to account for memory. 10. Sees that his "memory" is wrong. 11. Sent to live with uncles in 1855. 12. "These uncles" had told of scenes in Harrison campaign. 13. "All this" became real "mental pictures." 14. Could not distinguish "the reproduced incidents" of the campaign. 15. "Recollections of his experience" (i. e., of the incidents reproduced by his uncles) was dissociated from his historical knowledge.

KEEPING THE WORLD SAFE FOR COMMERCE, PAGE 70

While writing *Workways* I have seen in a newspaper an article about the *Bear*, entitled "Another Last Cruise for the Sturdy *Bear*." I give some quotations:

> The Coast Guard cutter *Bear*, soon to start for Arctic waters on her thirty-eighth annual voyage to the Far North, is soon to be discarded, according to plans in Congress for an appropriation of $925,000 to replace the wooden *Bear* with a new steel vessel.
>
> Men of the Coast Guard, however, are somewhat skeptical when the retirement of the *Bear* is mentioned. They recall that she has made a "last" voyage to the polar basin every year for several years.
>
> The *Bear* is the veteran of the service and has had an adventurous career. She was built in Greenock, Scotland, in 1874, for the British Government.
>
> Since 1886 the craft has been making annual cruises into the Arctic. North of Nome the cutter goes from village to village on the coast of the Bering Sea. She carries medical equipment and supplies of all sorts.
>
> In the north, the *Bear* is known as the "Good Samaritan." One of her many notable rescues was that of the crew of the whaler *James Allen* in Seguam Pass in 1894.
>
> Last year the cutter cruised more than 16,000 miles on the Bering Sea, Arctic Ocean, and along the Siberian coast.

LESSON 10

The emphasis in teaching link words should be against the mere connectives like *nevertheless* and *hence* and *thus;* it should encourage such real references as repeating words and saying "for that reason," "during this time." See especially the paragraph at the top of page 73.

The nonsense paragraph on page 73 has been effective in my classes as a concrete example of how the most complete linking with words may insure nothing but mystifying incoherence of thought. Mere words will not make coherent linking. The illustrative paragraph on page 74 is of the opposite kind: it does not seem very bad at first reading and is not likely to convey its message unless I give it a boost. If a little time is spent with it, if each sentence is read aloud, and a student tells what he has now been made to think about, the paragraph will be effective. (I chose it just because it is not startlingly incoherent, but is a typical example of rambling away from any topic that we think we can fasten on.) In the first sentence we take dinners to poor families; the second sentence is elaborately joined to this by the first ten words and then shoots suddenly and far to Christmas, to a party, and to children; then the third sentence is also profusely linked by eleven words, and concludes with "the size and success" of the party. The more a class dwells on this innocent-looking trio of sentences, the more it will see that the writer was re-

lying on verbal links and was quite forgetting to care what thoughts she was linking. The thoughts are the important element of a series of sentences.

The Exercise is difficult, more difficult than you would suppose at first reading. In assigning it call attention to "put sentences in a different order," and urge the class to feel free to make any alterations they like. A student who keeps his eyes within the sentences of the Exercise and labors to hitch them together as they stand will go through much painful exertion for nothing. The right way to work is *to stand away from the sentences,* to see what the general course of the narrative is, and then to set down the natural steps of it coherently. Such a task would be improperly difficult if the subject matter were prosy, but the story of Pooch and the grizzly has a certain momentum of its own that will lighten labor.

Perhaps, if you fear that the class will be daunted by the Exercise, it might be good policy to read the following original sentences to them while their books are closed. They will not get much direct help in this way, but will see the general nature of what they have to do.

In order to bring the passage to its climax I have had to omit most of the description of the fight between the bear and the terriers. Mr. James's sentences are as follows:

> Word came to Miller one day of a huge grizzly bear that was taking toll from the herds that cattlemen had loosed in the hills for the summer pasturage. Cow punchers had seen him and had pursued him in desultory fashion, but he was a cunning old fellow and eluded such hunters with seeming ease. So Miller was called upon to rid the community of this undesirable citizen.
>
> The Pooch sensed that something of great moment was in the offing. She sniffed around Miller's heels as he got together his camp outfit and roped it on a pack horse. Her excitement knew no bounds when the boss released his terrier pack. She had had but little to do with these outsiders, and fain would have engaged in combat with certain ones that passed rude remarks concerning her personal appearance and its suggestive origin. But a sharp word from the boss quelled all such desires for the moment.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Now Miller was a fervent admirer of the courage, the intelligence, the tireless perseverance and the lightning-like dash of the wire-haired terrier, but he was an experienced hunter and he knew the limitations of these little gamesters as well as their strong points. Nature had endowed them with all the virtues of the hunting dog, save the nose for the trail. They would attack anything they saw, but on a cold track they were useless. Therefore, in the famous Miller pack there were two keen-scented hounds, tolerated by the terriers for their ability as trackers, but regarded as strictly out of it when their clannish little crew swung into the chase.

On the second day out a hound suddenly bayed "Cold track." The terriers heard and understood his message as well as did Miller. The second trailer soon chimed in, and presently the wise pair were following up the bear's track, six whining, quivering terriers in their wake, greatly hindering the painstaking efforts of the hounds, did they but know it, in their impatience to come at grips with the killer.

All that long day the hounds scented the path for Miller and his fighters. The trail led over ridge and down draws, through patches of timber and over rocky divides. Now the bay of the hounds would indicate a warmer scent, and the sharp yapping of the terriers would add to the excitement. But still no bear. The wary old animal was keeping well in advance and out of sight.

And first in the van at every turn was the Pooch. Something wonderfully exciting was about to happen, she sensed, and you could bet your bottom dollar she was going to be in on it, whatever it was. Cocky, self-sufficient, she even tried to give directions to the experienced Mike, and the leader of the pack—on business bent and friendship forgotten for the time—was forced to halt proceedings ever and anon to tell this fresh interloper just where to get off. But it didn't faze the Pooch. Next moment she was more cocky than ever.

At last to Miller's strained ears came the sound he had awaited so long, the howling bark of old Pete that told of a hot scent. The message was repeated again and again. The bear was close at hand.

Nose to the trail, the hounds did not see what met the quick eyes of the Pooch, far in advance of the terrier pack. Fifty yards ahead she discovered a huge silver-gray form, turning, turning with bruin's peculiar inquisitiveness to ascertain the cause of all the tumult to the rear. She made for the bear at full gallop. Mike's shrill bark brought the rest of the pack to his heels as he bounded up the slope after her.

In about four Greenwich-chronometer seconds the big grizzly was surrounded by a snarling, snapping circle of tormentors. Whichever way he turned he was attacked from the rear by a little puffball of white that nipped him and darted to safety as he clumsily swung to fend off the attack. . . . .

The Pooch launched herself straight for the jaws of death. Attacking from the side, she flung out of the reach of those snapping tusks, and her teeth fastened on the bear's tender and vulnerable snout.

With a roar of agonized anger the grizzly reared and struck at the dog with his paw, exactly as a greatly annoyed old gentleman would brush a pestiferous fly off his nose. The blow struck the Pooch fair, and she was torn

loose, rolling end over end to strike against a bowlder and lie still.

A shot rang out, and the grizzly toppled over, mortally wounded. A second shot ended his murderous career. . . .

She was able to sit up at the camp fire that evening and partake of considerable nourishment, which consisted in the main of fresh bear meat.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 77

Argument, as we older people all know from experience, is by far the most difficult kind of composition: it requires, if it is really to be persuasive, more art and tact than exposition. If a class has had some previous training in argument, it can take this assignment early in the year. If it has had very little practice in argument, the best tactics will be not to undertake this Suggestion until Lesson 27 has been covered. Any effort to produce real structure in an argument will be abortive until a class has had some definite advice and has examined some models.

Weigh the statement in the first paragraph that "argument is a goal." It would be easy to overstate the truth, but it has been useful to me by giving a kind of unity to my teaching of the different types of composition. (For remarks on "types" as dangerous see the comments on Lesson 21.) I would not press it or imply that it is a philosophy of underlying principles. All I mean is that a student often sees a perspective of purpose ahead if he is shown how narration and description are necessary to exposition, and how exposition is the greatest ingredient of persuasive argument, and how, therefore, there is a natural sequence which is not due to mere textbook classification.

LESSON 11

The definition and treatment of paragraphs in this Lesson may not be eternal truth; it may be that some other way of regarding paragraphs will ultimately be found better for school practice. If you feel that you have an inkling of that better way, adapt the exercises to your own method and discard the text. I will not argue for my way of treating paragraphs; I know that every teacher insensibly works into a way of constructing his own paragraphs, and must then suppose that his way is best for students. I have always tried to avoid that supposition and to discover what appealed best to boys. All I can do in a textbook is to write out my classroom practice. If I try to give a symposium of what various textbooks say, I shall give nothing definite. The formula of "a new scene, a new time" is effective in eighth-grade and ninth-grade narrative; from that point it can easily be advanced to cover description and exposition. It seems, to my prejudiced senses, that the formula brings results. I have not yet encountered in any educational journal or any textbook, or in talk with any teacher, a device that sounds any better. No college instructor who appraises school products has advised me of a place where some better method seems to be used. But I am going to keep

my eyes and ears open for that other method. It might appear somewhere.

Beyond the arbitrary usages of Sections A and B the gist of the teaching about paragraphs is at the bottom of page 80: "The author's signal that here is a different topic." It is never safe to assume that a given series of coherent sentences would have to be divided into paragraphs at certain demonstrable points. One author may wish to hoist a signal for one reason; another author may wish to show different emphasis. I have always wished that some university would publish the results of an experiment of this sort: mimeograph a passage from Irving or Stevenson or Kipling, submit it to all the members of the English faculty for paragraphing, and tabulate the results and reasons. There would be a wholesome revelation of what a paragraph is. I once had a partial glimpse of it. In a rhetoric text that I used was a solid passage from Stevenson; though I tried to tolerate different possibilities of division into paragraphs if a boy could give a reason, I insisted that at one point there should not be a division. The next day a student showed me that Stevenson had divided at that point. You can now understand why I am skeptical about all the paraphernalia of paragraph structure that is to be found in textbooks, and why I say as a climax to the Lesson, on page 83, that "teachers often refrain from criticizing a questionable paragraph."

Until you have experimented as long as I have, you will not believe the importance of naming *specific* topics in the Exercise. Each year I am more amazed by the utter inability of some students to specify; most of them seem never to perceive anything in a paragraph except a cloudy generality like "what he did next." If I ask "But *what* did he do?" and receive the answer that he bored through the eaves-trough, I have a hard time to convince the boy that there is much difference between a "what" and an "eaves-trough." There is a whole world of educational difference. Often I have grown frenzied at the perpetual vagueness of answers and have yelled, "Name something, name something; for heaven's sake, specify." At the time this rather mystifies a class, but years later they understand.

Comments on the Exercises

The demand for specifying is a large principle that applies all the way up the gamut from spelling to interpreting poetry. One reason why literature is poorly read—probably the greatest reason—is that we do not see the specific pictures that an author sets before us. The difference between third-rate and first-rate verse is the difference between vague words and concrete images. Vagueness is a fundamental weakness; a large part of education is a training in specifying. Think of this when you handle the Exercises. Note the point in the last paragraph of the Lesson about "constructing his own paragraphs"; that is the big consideration for all textbook work with the subject. See in the Index "Specific answers required."

Number 1 is from near the end of "The Young Man of Great Expectations," in *Tales of a Traveler,* page 188 of the Lake Classics edition. The paragraphing differs somewhat in different editions. The

original text was as follows: 1. "Well, sir"—the people in the room. 2. "My uncle lay"—the details of the room that showed how my uncle had lived. 3. "When I entered"—the greeting. 4. "Nephew"—his last words. 5. "I pressed"—his death. But other divisions are reasonable and proper. The first two of Irving's paragraphs might be put together; the last two sentences of the selection might be set apart as a closing paragraph, for the time is different and the topic may be said to be quite distinct from what precedes.

Number 2 is from Dickens's "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" (page 122, *A Christmas Carol,* Lake Classics edition). A good deal of latitude must be allowed in this paragraphing if a student can name real topics. For example, sentences 15-17 might be made into a separate paragraph, called "going up on deck"; and sentences 18-26 might be divided after 20. Dickens's way, which shows the four scenes better, was: 1. "When I left"—calm and snug when I went to bed. 2. "I turned in . . . . all standing"—my thoughts before going to sleep. 3. "I dreamed"—troubled dreaming in my cabin. 4. "I could not see"—getting the sail in and lighting up.

Number 3. 1. "The moment Tom's lessons"—killing time till school is out. 2. "Now the wheelwright was"—the feud with the wheelwright. 3. "Moreover, his presence"—alliance of the wheelwright and the master. (This might begin with the previous sentence, but is really another scene than the beginning of the quarrel; it is the warfare that developed, in which an alliance was made against Tom.) 4. "This they would have found some difficulty in doing"—how Jacob Doodlecalf brought Tom to defeat. 5. "The master, who was stooping"—Tom is captured.

LESSON 12

Since I was not brought up on topic sentences, seldom used such a thing in my own writing except unconsciously, and never observed that the makers of our classics worried much about them, I have not been disposed to favor them in teaching. But they are so much recommended nowadays that I have been open to conviction. What I do or what authors do is no basis for judging what may be the best way of instructing boys and girls.

Such trials as I have made do not reveal much help in my own work. Boys seem to feel that "topic sentence" is a kind of recipe, or even a panacea; they readily adopt a habit of posting this topical notice at the outset of each paragraph, sometimes underlining it. The underlining seems to me symptomatic of an evil: boys are thinking of a topic sentence as a kind of detached announcement. There is a further bad result in my classes: many a boy feels that he has propitiated the devil of incoherence by offering up a sacrifice of a topic sentence to him, and therefore feels no fear of sin while he meanders on through the rest of the paragraph.

It will not do for me to argue from these facts that another teacher, with different instincts and training, may not succeed very well by stressing topic sentences. I can imagine that they might be made a very powerful implement for directing attention to unity and coherence. If you have not formed your opinions, give topic sentences

a chance; try them for a year; see what good and what harm they produce in your class. Here is a Lesson to help along. Perhaps if your class has in mind from the beginning that "this *may* be a very misleading device" (page 92), you will develop a method of using it as so many other teachers have done. My own emphasis in using the Lesson is this: "See the *unity* that the topic sentence reveals."

Comments on the seven paragraphs: 1. The natural and easy comment is that the paragraph treats of two processes, polishing and smoking. The two processes might be packed into a unified paragraph; but this writer implies that in his first four sentences he is talking about what goes on in a polishing-room, and that the smoking of the last two sentences is done somewhere else. He leaves us in doubt as to whether he thought of any topic. 2. This tells about the importance of coal, the time it has been in use, the two kinds; and it then announces the topic of the theme, "distillation." All this information might be stowed in a unified introductory paragraph, but it is not so stowed. We are not sure what idea the writer was trying to bring out. 3. Admirably constructed by a professional; it follows out the announced topic of "success and usefulness in *varied* fields of work." Make this paragraph emphasize the real fault of the two previous ones: they did not fail because of containing two or three different items, but because of not combining the items with any one well-defined purpose. 4. The first four sentences develop the topic of "the effect of the quiet, refined home"; the last sentence veers off to "he denied the truth of the anecdote," and thus rather makes us wonder whether the first four sentences are true. The fault is really more one of emphasis than of unity. 5. The natural and easy comment is that the first two sentences are about "this lecture" and the last two sentences about "other lectures." Yet that is no analysis of the fault. The trouble is that the lecture on war is not used as an illustration of the power of all good lectures; it does not lead up to that topic—as it could very easily be made to do. Excellent practice could be had by rewriting this paragraph for unity, making the war lecture point the way to the influence of all lectures, and arranging for a climax at "spiritual value." 6. The first three sentences tell about "using idle hours for making furniture"; the last one tells about "the difficulties of going about this work." Here is another example of how the mere items do not destroy unity; for the idea of surmounting difficulties could be blended with the previous idea of "time could be very well employed." Ideas are plastic and can be molded into unity; but they will remain separate chunks unless a writer's purpose molds them. 7. Well unified about the one topic of "searching for Rosa."

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 95

The book says once more that a planless composition is worse than no composition. Whenever in future the book omits to say that, a teacher should supply it. If every theme undertaken this year is definite training in designing a structure, the class may gain an apprehension of what real composition is. What proportion of American high-school teachers do you suppose are accustomed to assigning themes

by saying, "Write a letter about something" or "Tell about what happened one day," without indicating that the assignment is a job of architecture, of building a theme?

"Are you expecting to apply what you have learned?" Many in your class will never realize, unless you make the emphasis, what a book can only suggest—that every Lesson is made for use, to be applied, and to be applied always.

LESSON 13

It could be said that this Lesson is indefinite, because it announces no definition, sets up no exact limits. It proceeds by an entirely different method: it shows an obviously ununified paragraph that contains a clutter of ideas, and then it shows a set of obviously fragmentary paragraphs. Any sensible student will see what is wrong and will agree to the logic of the seven infantile paragraphs on page 98. Perceiving these faults is a valuable lesson, as illustrated by the last paragraph on page 98. If that boy had done no more than spend a quarter of an hour with some printed samples of broken bits of paragraphs, he could have avoided his major errors.

Comments on the Exercise

First Exercise. A. The first and fourth paragraphs speak of my first impression of Mantell; the second and third tell why Mantell is a great artist—because no one thought of him as a person, but only as the Hamlet of the play. All the material could be put together in a unified paragraph about "The first moment of Mantell's appearance proved that he is a great actor." B. Good and necessary paragraphs for dialog. C. The first paragraph is a typical example of an "introduction" that ought to be merely the first sentence of an opening paragraph. If this and the second paragraph and the first sentence of the third paragraph were put together, we should have a unified result, but a lumbering and needless preliminary announcement of what is to follow. This, like number A, shows how broken bits are most likely to occur and to be most tiresome when a student attempts to "introduce" his subject. D. A typical case of a paragraph that is thought to be unified on such a topic as "setting a room to rights," and that has a sort of unity; but it is a heaped-up clutter. An interesting experiment is to chart on the board what the arrangement of furniture was and to try to discover what unity of purpose there was in the arrangement. It will appear that two sides of the room were pretty fully occupied, that free space was left on the other side, beyond the foot of the bed. Now, could this evident purpose be a guide to making a purposeful and unified paragraph? E. Very well unified on the topic of "determined to start that engine." The first three sentences show why there was need of determination. F. A sad heap of things after the first three sentences: shower, shallow end for non-swimmers, lockers. Yet how good a paragraph might be made of these very materials if they began with the shower and were so worded as to bring out "the fun of diving and splashing."

Second Exercise. The first paragraph may well be left as it is. If the present fourth paragraph follows this, its "cause of the eternal haze" will make a good link with the "clouds of smoke" in the first; and the material of the third paragraph belongs with this and could follow it. The second paragraph of the new theme would then be about "first glimpses through the smoke," but there ought to be changes of wording and emphasis to make the paragraph orderly. A third paragraph could be built out of numbers 7 and 2, in that order, telling what is seen far to the right—the river and a train rushing along its bank. The large public buildings of 6 and 8 are at the left (for in 8 we "turn back" from the right), and probably the state capitol of 5 is in that direction. So a third paragraph could be made by massing all this architecture. A natural order would be 8, 5, 6, because then we should conclude with "this enormous city is guided," which is a good close for the description. Number 9 could stand as it is, a rather clever way of drawing the veil.

TABBY'S ADOPTED CHILDREN, PAGE 102

It is likely that half the members of the class can contribute some case of the caring for an orphan by a foster-mother that was a different sort of animal. It is always a pleasing subject. When the pleasure of it has warmed the minds of the class, indicate (without dashing cold water) that a reader or an audience will not feel our interest if we tell a formless narrative. What episode was most charming? Fix on that as a goal and work toward it.

LESSON 14

The phrase "straight line" is one of those curious discoveries that we come upon sometimes when our minds are striving unusually hard to make an idea concrete to a class. It has been as useful to me as "that particular" is for explaining when a modifier is restrictive—an expression which is not a definition, not all-inclusive, and not entirely logical, but which has power to fix an idea and make it go to work. So "straight line" is not a perfect metaphor and would not do as a criterion in a treatise on rhetoric. I have never had any interest in a treatise. My only interest is to find those practical teacher's tricks that will cause actions in young brains.

One day I was expatiating upon an incoherent theme which opened with a morning scene, advanced to afternoon, and then, without warning, plunged back to morning. "This writer," said I, "has made me dizzy. He swings me in a circle. I feel as if I had looped the loop. A theme ought to go straight ahead." (Then my hands went into action.) "This theme, if it began in the morning, ought to move straight ahead—like this; watch my finger—to noon and afternoon and evening and the next day. It ought not to shoot me ahead and then jerk me around and set me down where I started. Every theme should go straight; it ought to carry me in a straight line of time or place."

The phrase "straight line" was an accident in a rather heated and

very inaccurate talk to a class. I had never till that moment spoken of a theme in terms of a "straight line," and had no thought of speaking so again. But I fancied that the words had conveyed an idea. I heard a boy repeat it, grinning, as if it were an odd thing to say. So I repeated it, because it was odd. Next week it came in handy again to arrest attention and show another boy how his theme was as jagged as a flash of lightning. He could *see* that it was jagged when I charted the course of it with three lines on the blackboard. All the other boys could see. They took up the expression as a handy one for their own use when they had to criticize themes. It became our favorite term, because it applied so often and could be illustrated so convincingly. After I had put "straight line" into the first edition of *Theme-Building*, I found that it was effective in print. Boys could report what the book had said and could apply the idea in judging their own composition.

Of course the phrase claims too much, for many a good chapter or paragraph does curve back to the starting-point. "Straight-line" is not an exact formula or a universal guide. But in my school it never did any harm and was always active in good works. It is here applied to paragraphs; in Lesson 17 it is applied to whole compositions. It is not nearly so much needed in teaching paragraphs as in whole compositions, but even in paragraphs my life would be rather dull without it.

The "straight line in time" is nearer to a panacea for incoherence than I could ever have believed. A census of ten thousand incoherent paragraphs would probably show that 75% (very likely 90%) are faulty because of a violation of time order. Keep note during this year of how many paragraphs you see that are incoherent in some other way. You will be surprised at their relative scarcity.

Now I am tempted to proceed into an essay on teaching, using "straight line" as a text. I could elaborate upon this general principle: A large part of a teacher's art consists in singling out from a whole abstract genus of error, like "incoherence," some individual, concrete error, like "looping back in time"; we never produce effects by reciting about a genus of error, but always by making some one error visible and tangible. I refrain from the essay. Already the world is full of wise philosophy addressed to teachers of English.

"Shift" is, where I live, the most efficacious word to describe the place where incoherence occurs. Boys don't like to be accused of "shifting"—there seems to be some unpleasant connotation in the verb which makes them uneasy. And "shift" makes a picture of the error.

"Don't assume," says the Exercise, "that every paragraph is incoherent." Many experiments with adults show how wide of the truth we shoot if we feel sure in advance that we are asked to criticize what is wrong. If we don't know, if the chance is even that we are confronted with excellence in composition, then we have to sharpen our perceptions and be wary. *Discrimination* is the necessity in all worthwhile criticism. Every exercise in *Theme-Building* tries to apply that truth by presenting a jumbled lot of good and bad.

Another sad truth about adult criticism illustrates good policy in school: We are all prone to pick at some slight flaw, especially a ques-

tionable use of a word. It may be well to sharpen students' sensitiveness to diction—that matter is not discussed here. But it is also well to learn how to see big faults. The student who wants to object to "the motor room" or to "in the motor room in the effort" should be told to calm his perturbed spirit and to attend to the business in hand.

Comments on the Six Paragraphs

1. The time order is not seriously wrong or confusing, but students can see how much more likely they are to make coherent paragraphs if they avoid this writer's back-tracking in the second and the last sentences. If he had begun with the time of the last sentence, and followed this with the time of the second sentence, and then followed with the first and third, he would have carried us along much better. 2. Admirable because of its time order and its purposeful progress from poverty and quandary, through the pages of the magazine, to "the first thing on the page." 3. The first four sentences pile up the deafening noises with good effect, but the straight line of this effect is broken off short at "one gets accustomed to all this," and then is shifted to the weak and very different topic of "first night's rest is *somewhat* impaired by the noise which he *imagines* he hears." 4. The first two sentences follow a straight line by offering a pair of opposite thoughts contrasted by "however." Then the last sentence swings us back to consider the first thought. The natural order would be: first thought, second thought, consideration of this second thought. 5. A coherent paragraph of description made by a professional. 6. A sad hodge-podge of purposes. The first two sentences could be coherent, but as they stand they seem to be at cross-purposes; for "I am not much of a reader" and "it is a long, deep book." This "deep" book is said in the third sentence to "give accounts of trivial events." The fourth sentence tells of Franklin's experience and advice. Then the fifth sentence goes back to the writer's lack of interest in the book and goes forward to "did me some good." The way in which it did good is explained in the last sentence, which also has the duty of wandering back to the early part of the paragraph to tell about the contents of the book.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 108

The world is full of plans. Almost any newspaper gives accounts of projects and campaigns and hopeful undertakings. One while the press was giving us pictures of the monument erected at one of the busiest corners in St. Louis "In memory of child life sacrificed on the altar of haste and recklessness: 32 children killed by motor cars this year." That was a plan to decrease loss of life. The dedication of the monument was a feature of a Safety Week program. Any "safety" plan is excellent material for a letter. Inventions—our imaginings of what would be a good plan—should be encouraged. If ingenuity is shown in some letters, a local paper might be glad to print a couple of

the best themes. Is there a plan for relieving congestion in the streets? That is a live topic in every city today. Every rural district knows of plans to check some insect pest. A little class discussion will show that the world seems largely composed of plans nowadays. Everybody has a plan to rid the world of war.

LESSON 15

It *is* almost true, as school advice, that every paragraph is likely to be better if the writer is thinking about a climax for it. Have you ever seen a theme in which a poor effect was caused by too much effort at climax in paragraphs? Certainly there could be such a theme, but I have never encountered it.

Weakness at the end, of paragraphs or compositions, is far more common than I ever suspected ten years ago. What is more important, a teacher's attack upon this particular weakness—*at-the-end*—will, indirectly, be a flank movement upon incoherence. If any tolerably conscientious student is mindful from the outset of a paragraph that he ought not to arrive at weakness, he will probably be conscious of a jar when he veers away from straight-ahead progress. Whatever the psychology of the matter is, it proves true in practice that an effort at emphasis is an insurance against incoherence. If a writer aims at a climax, he is at least kept attentive; and most incoherence is caused by inattention.

The advice on page 111 about "not beginning so entertainingly" is far from a general truth; a humorous opening is often a capital device. What is more, there is no rule of composition that such an opening must be lived up to and that the end must be funnier still. All that page 111 says is this: "Realize that you are beginning in a striking way; realize what you are about as you proceed; ask yourself whether it is good architecture to *close* with the very dregs of the subject—the refuse."

1. The paragraph is about West Point graduates (for the first two lines are merely linking with a previous paragraph). It is very emphatic in the first sentence—"the best officers," and tries to continue the emphasis in the second sentence. But no more emphasis appears, for we hear of "no easy task," "they graduate," "they are paid sixty dollars each year." The last sentence is the most trivial detail.

2. After showing that the book is Johnson's "greatest" and gives "splendid accounts" and "was received with eagerness" the paragraph closes with "the small price paid for it *and for his other works.*"

3. The paragraph begins with advertisements that hold the attention of the tired business man, but closes weakly and wanderingly with "some that interest *and some that don't.*"

4. Well managed for emphasis up to "I was so terribly scared." The last clause of the last sentence is perhaps not seriously weak, but it is certainly not a good model.

5. Good emphasis. Each sentence speaks of the contrast between man's work and God's work, and the last one holds our attention to "this contrast."

6. The first three sentences emphasize the plot, and possibly the fourth may be called a discussion of a big element of the plot; but the last sentence clearly shifts away to the topic of "the purpose to please."

LESSON 16

The gospel of transition between paragraphs is just the same as for sentences, though it is more necessary in the case of paragraphs. For that reason it may be well to study this Lesson, on the more obvious way of building thought-bridges, before taking up the smaller and more artistic question of bridges between sentences in Lesson 9. The principles of making transitions between sentences will be better approached in that way and better illustrated.

A boy can understand "reader will bump his nose" on page 114 and may respond to it; he will feel only a languid interest in such a generality as "reader will feel perplexed." There is a great gulf of pedagogy between those two expressions. The word *bump* is not used wantonly or accidentally, but for the purpose of making a printed page produce some result in composition.

I have just had a testimony from a boy who studied Grahame's transitions three years ago; he says that they are still vivid in his mind and still warn him not to bump a reader when he passes to a new paragraph. Finding this passage was a good fortune, because there are few chapters of literature that yield such a combination of story interest and flights to different scenes.

If you can dramatize Grahame's difficulties, you will help the class. Students forget that an author is human and must use all his wits to secure his effects. These transitions did not come by a mere flow of genius, but by a difficult process of sorting out possibilities—thus:

Put yourself in Mr. Grahame's place as he sits at his desk planning. In his mind are all the elements of a complicated situation in a family: the death of Billy, which looms up as the most prominent fact; the sorrow of Martha; the sympathy of the two girls, who wept with her; the concern of the other servants; what the father and mother had said and done; what the children had for breakfast; how they talked all the time about Edward's letter that had come the night before; how the boys quarreled with the girls; how Martha had been brave and cheerful while she served the children's breakfast, but had run upstairs and broken down when Billy's name was mentioned; how the boy broke his shoelace; who told the boy about Billy's death; how the girls were not as sympathetic as they would have been if they had not been so offended by Edward's failing to thank them; how Harold was not told the sad news, because he was so young; how and when Harold had gone outdoors; why the girls were in the schoolroom when the boys did not have to be there; how Harold also was rebuffed by the girls, and how Martha played with him at a quarter past nine. These are only a few samples of the hundred items that are all spread out on one level in Mr. Grahame's mind. Which shall he select, and which shall he not mention at all? With which one shall he begin? Which shall be second? How shall he move straight along from the first to the second and on to the third?

Mr. Grahame does not jump us from "shoelace" to "brother was dead"; at the beginning of the second paragraph he uses a short sen-

tence that speaks of "the cause" of the sobs which are the subject of the first paragraph. Thus he carries us across smoothly. The second paragraph is about the death of Martha's brother Billy; and it closes, like the first paragraph, with a grimly playful contrast between Martha's grief and my shoelace. The author did not leap from "grief and shoelace" to "I wandered off"; he carries the topic along by referring to it as "a poor sort of beginning," and thus we are made to anticipate the next step beyond the beginning. He does not leap suddenly from "the obstinate way of the girls" to Harold outdoors. He rounds out his episode of the third paragraph by saying, "Hence it was I received my second rebuff." We are prepared for a third step.

"Somewhat disheartened," begins the fourth paragraph, continuing the mood that we have been in, "I made my way downstairs." Then we are ready for whatever may happen. The boy's mood becomes cheerful; he plays that he is a puma, and "rolls Harold over on the gravel." The next topic is "the quarrel." The author could very well have begun with Harold's exclamation, but chose a more interesting way: he abruptly states a general maxim about "things that don't come off," and not until his second sentence does he carry on the previous topic with "this was one of the things that didn't come off." The reader has not been sidetracked, but is pleased at this novel way of keeping him on the track.

The paragraphs are from *Dies Irae,* which originally appeared in the *Yellow Book* for January, 1896. The next ten paragraphs are in Lesson 42.

Comments on the Exercise

To discover the central topic of each paragraph in the Exercise and to describe it in specific, concrete words is harder than any student dreams. If you do not put this difficulty plainly to the class, students will suppose the task is simple, and they will derive little benefit from it. To name reference words is almost mechanically easy; to say what they connect is the hard and valuable part of the task.

1. The flight to Lycia. 2. "Being so near their journey's end"; reaching the ruins and carcasses in a wild part of Lycia. 3. "This mischief"; realizing that the Chimæra may be near. 4. "Nothing remarkable" (note that "as I have already said" is a poor linking device for students to employ in their short themes); the smoke from the nostrils of the Chimæra. 5. "To turn Pegasus about"; descending to the cavern's mouth. 6. "Within the cavern"; the three bodies and the three heads in one. 7. "Slumbering as two-thirds of it were"; the prey that it was gnawing. 8. "Knew it to be the Chimæra"; escaping the Chimæra's headlong rush.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 120

An epoch is marked in any student's life when he first realizes that to spout objections hotly or sarcastically will do no good. That is the fact of prime importance in undertaking to express our objections. It is the key to much of the success in argument. Politeness in attack is power.

LESSON 17

It is easy to trust too much to a formula like "straight line" and to expect that every well-made paragraph of literature will show, when minutely examined, an undeviating directness. We must keep students warned that such is not the case. Parkman, for example, swings a loop from the fort to the Indian camp and back again; he makes a time loop forward to a later period of Washington's life and back again. His progress is not literally "straight" in every particular. But his carefulness always gives a sense of "straightness in purpose"—that is the significant fact. He does not take an aimless excursion to the Indian camp or a heedless flight to later years; he realizes where he goes, and he never allows a reasonably wide-awake reader to feel the slightest confusion.

"It seems to tell itself," says page 123. Here, as in Lesson 16 and always, we do well to bring home the fact that authors are not divinely and easily perfect. A professional baseball player makes errors. The comparison with baseball is all too trite, and boys may be weary of it; but they understand it. They realize—as a non-player never could—the effort and attention, and the possibility of mistake, when a professional player is in action. If you compare an author with him, you will bring the author down to the level of human frailty where his example becomes alive.

One weakness of a recitation on this Lesson may be the mere repetition of the criticism pointed out by the book. Some of this is useful; I should require a bit of it in a written test—for example, "How does Parkman keep a straight line in the scene at the ford?" But I should try to stir up some original comment, especially some objections that the book had made out too strong a case in favor of Parkman. Most good is to be expected from first-hand student criticism of Defoe and of the student writers in the Second and Third Exercises.

Comments on the Exercises

First Exercise. One liberty has been taken with the text—substituting *started* for *came* in the second paragraph, because Defoe did not mean "had already arrived," and his use of *came* would confuse students. The paragraph is a striking example of keeping time, place, and emphasis progressing together. The time begins "about noon" and proceeds by these steps: stood, listened and looked, went higher to look, went along the shore to look, returned to the footprint, felt "innumerable fluttering thoughts," started home, on the way thither felt the different fears described, reached his castle, fled into it, "next morning" could not remember, slept none that night, and then further progress of time is indicated by "the farther I was from the occasion of my fright." In discussing the place it will be well to explain to the class that "a straight line" does not mean that a chart of Crusoe's movements would be a straight line, but means that a reader can follow Crusoe's movements easily—can "keep them straight in his mind without effort." Show also how the time element, here as in most compo-

sition, is much more important than the place. The course of movements is this: I was going toward my boat on the beach; from the footprint I made a trip to the rising ground and back; I made a trip up and down the shore; I came back to the footprint; I ran from there straight to my castle and into it. The progress of "more and more terrified" is this: I was exceedingly surprised; I stood thunderstruck; then through the rest of the first paragraph a sympathetic reader must feel how the terror is growing as Crusoe runs up and down and forward and back; by the beginning of the second paragraph I am "out of myself"; on my way home I am terrified to the last degree, and my wild ideas are indescribable; by the time I reached home my mind was no longer working, for I have no memory of what I did; after a sleepless night my fear continued to increase (in the last paragraph); to fancy that the devil himself has stepped on the shore is the extreme of terror.

SECOND EXERCISE. In these paragraphs there are numerous minor faults which ought not to be discussed in recitation unless there is time to spare. Attention should be focused on the one or two ways in which each paragraph shows a decided turn from the straight line of progress in time or place. In No. 1, for example, the following little boggles are not really the kind of errors that the student is told to criticize: the incoherence of "but it was published"; the illogical use of "for this was published"; the slight awkwardness of "the Primer itself"; the making of a separate sentence for *abomination;* the somewhat jerky and unrelated last two sentences. The one outstanding violation of time order is at the beginning of the third sentence: after the Primer is all published in the second sentence, we are jumped back in time to "the reading long before the Primer appeared."

The most effective way of showing students how to detect failures to keep a straight line may be illustrated by No. 2. Teach them to follow closely from each sentence to the next, thus: "Real merit is brought out by hard work. Work teaches the merit of obedience. It teaches the merit of 'seeing the matter through.' Then we are jumped suddenly to 'the boy gets a strong body.'" From here on the paragraph compares a farm with an office.

No. 3. The last sentence goes back in time. After the servants are trained, we learn what they did before they were trained.

No. 4. In the first two sentences the boys are at the soda-fountain; in the third they go there. Sentences 4-7 tell about the cleanness of the fun; then the fountain is suddenly likened to the resort of "the loafer of the streets."

No. 5. The first four sentences emphasize how "this never-ending sea of brownish vegetation interests few"; the fifth sentence tells of the interesting animals, "the innumerable species of prairie life"; the last sentence denies that there is enough of interest to write about. If the fifth sentence had been put first, as an admission that the prairie is interesting in one way, and if then there had been a transition to "otherwise the prairie is utterly uninteresting," the paragraph could have been unified. The strange back-and-forth turning of the thought is shown by the fact that the writer began his next paragraph with "one of the most interesting stretches." It is hard to believe, but it is exactly

true, that an able boy, who did well in entrance examinations for college, wrote the sentences just as they stand.

No. 6. After telling us that Cooper failed in his setting because he knew nothing of England the paragraph says that "most people thought the book was written by an Englishman." This apparent contradiction could have been explained and reconciled in a unified paragraph (Cooper, in spite of his ignorance, followed his models of English novels so skilfully), but this paragraph makes no effort to reconcile and unify.

THIRD EXERCISE. *Comments on Theme 1.* After the first paragraph has told about where signs are placed in cars, the second jumps (by a misleading remark about "great business") to "changing the advertisements at night." After we hear about the placing of the advertisements, we are told in the third paragraph about making them.

Theme 2. It can be argued that the beginning of the second paragraph is out of an orderly arrangement because it defines a punt after we have decided to build one—and the point is a good one to note. Yet it is doubtful whether we ought to quarrel with this writer's order, though we must object to the jerky way of bringing in topics—what a punt is, where punts are seen, what the plans called for. The first real violation of a straight line is at the beginning of the third paragraph: after "two weeks later we always stuck to the seat" the time reverts to "a few days for drying the tar." The theme has many faults of proportion and emphasis—e. g., the first third is merely deciding to build, and the second third gives no real account of the building. But the straight line is broken only once.

Theme 3. In the first paragraph we cannot follow the thought from "guarding health is not easy" to "must admit that the systems are very advanced" to "danger because millions of people are growing." The second paragraph begins abruptly with the Board of Health, but is fairly orderly. The disorder in paragraphs 2 and 3 comes from mentioning the departments in this order: the different departments, refuse, milk, the different departments, milk and water, these two, water, milk (i. e., farmers and health-officers). We have to struggle to find out that the fourth paragraph is about carelessness with garbage at the homes. At the beginning of the last paragraph we are jumped from "polluting the air" to "keep the city clean." The rest of the paragraph is fairly coherent on "keep the parks clean" until the last seven words, which swing us off to "cost."

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGES 131-132

Few weaknesses of human nature are more common or more pitiful than our eager grasping at an offer of great benefits for a petty price. It is appalling to read the testimonials from men of high position and great ability who affirm that they have received most precious improvement of their intellects by following some printed directions for "improving their power of speech." There must be hundreds of thousands of hopeful gulls who pay money for books that are guaranteed to make

people compelling and winsome conversationalists. To expose such fraud in a set of themes will teach more than composition.

I have always wondered why students are not taught to realize the amount of money that a community spends upon them for education. Many a town has had to raise its tax rate to four per cent because of the mounting costs of high schools. There is now, as there never was before 1910, serious question of the wisdom of lavishing such funds on students who treat the gift with indifference and do not recognize any obligation to respond by hard and faithful work. The subject is one to rouse emotion and to cause a searching of hearts.

LESSON 18

The definition of a plot will not satisfy a demand for academic completeness; it is not adequate for a treatise on the short story. All I claim for it is that the exceptions have never caused trouble in my classes and that the simple formula of "making people care" directs attention to the effort which counts most toward success in school composition. We cannot "make readers care" unless we show motives at the outset, unless we do all we can to make characters alive, unless we lead up to a crisis, and unless we arrange a climax. The summary on page 135 is a concentrated extract from many years of effort to find what advice acts most directly on school authors.

It will increase the interest of a class if you explain that the three stories referred to in the Exercise were written in the ordinary course of school routine, by boys who sat at ordinary desks, writing for an ordinary teacher who had no thought of ever embalming what they did in a textbook. The writers of the three stories in Lesson 43 were called, respectively, Toto, Harry, and Brownie; they went to college at Harvard, Antioch, and the University of California.

Comments on the Exercises

First Exercise. (1) The discussion of "In what character are we most interested?" ought not to degenerate into idle talk of how we should feel about a mother or a father or a child who faced starvation in a cabin. The discussion should center on "What has the author done to make us interested?" It is a discussion of composition, not of our imaginings. The writer has done nothing to arouse our sympathies for one character or against another; man and wife agree on the desperateness of the undertaking, and there is no stress or conflict between them. Ask if students can name any good short story in which there is no conflict between characters; then they will see that "A Journey Almost Taken" has hardly any plot, but is merely a descriptive sketch of a perilous situation. If the husband were determined that the wife should not go, if there were some cross-purpose, some different contrivings for saving the children's lives—then a plot could be developed. The writer did not invent such a basis of plot. (2) The opening situa-

tion is this: a family marooned in a forest during winter, the father confined to his bed, the mother not strong enough to make the fifty-mile snowshoe trip to the settlement, the supply of food very low, the helpless, hungry children. (3) If a student argues that there is a "change of situation" when the resolution is made that Hettie shall try to go to the settlement, he is right, in a way. But the great turn of events is in the last paragraph—"was heard a knock." (4) At the close the family "is saved from starvation." A good discussion may be had on "Should the writer carry on his narrative to tell of the hungry people eating, or is it better to stop short of that?" (5) We are interested in this change of situation because the family is rescued from death—the dullest student knows that. But are we thinking more of the children safe at home or of the wife who might have been on the long trail? Most of our interest depends on using our own imagination, as if we were reading a matter-of-fact account in a newspaper. The writer has not invented any surprise, has not solved any complication.

Second Exercise. The gist of the answers for the other two stories of Lesson 43 is as follows:

"Sixty Blocks and Thirty Dollars." 1. There is only one character in whom to be interested. 2. A boy is setting out to have a grand time by squandering thirty dollars for his own amusement. 3. At the box office, when the boy discovers that he has no money. 4. A boy who has recovered his lost money is spending money for the amusement of the family. 5. Because we have followed a penniless boy on a long trip home, who expects nothing but chagrin when he arrives there.

"A Four-footed Blessing." 1. There is no reason, unless our imagination happens to work in some way hard to analyze, for being more interested in one character than in the other. Say that you are going to ask for a show of hands; ask each student to make up his mind before the question is put; give Fuller a place on the ballot. 2. A poor couple —the husband consumptive—are spending all the little money they have to restore the husband's health. 3. The abrupt change of topic at the beginning of paragraph 4, where Fuller is first mentioned, could be called the change of situation, because the agent of the change is there set in operation; though Fuller does not enter the bounds of the story till paragraph 5. 4. The Lyonses have $5000 for the expenses of the sanitarium—where, presumably, Jasper's health can be restored. 5. Because we have become acquainted with two people in a situation that rouses our sympathies; because the money they have won probably means escape from death and widowhood.

LESSON 19

Why is the formula of "the four w's" (when, where, why, and who) so generally accepted as valid? I could never find that it was helpful. It seems, in my experience, to oblige a student to give, mechanically and with dreary artificiality, a census of the time, place, situation, and people who are to be brought into action. How many 5000-word stories, where there is plenty of room, are built in that way?

What reader wants a census? We wish to become acquainted with people, to feel their emotions, and to see how the hero rises out of distress.

If your analysis of story-writing differs from mine, if you have learned a way of making the four w's produce well-motived plots, fit Lesson 19 to your method by telling the class that you think the book underestimates the four w's; tell them that "the time always means a great deal to an audience" (if you can prove it) and that "some description of the place should always be given at the outset" (if that is true of your experience of the best high-school stories).

Comments on the Exercise

Section I. There are only a few faint traces of character-drawing. Hettie is certainly a determined person; Hank is ready with his revolver. The boy with thirty dollars seems a bit absent-minded and a good deal of a spendthrift and generous; also he must be excitable, for he feels "ultimate embarrassment" and gives "a wild shriek of joy." There is a distinct effort in the second paragraph of "A Four-footed Blessing" to tell of the "dispositions" of the pair: Jasper has "optimism and a kindly nature"; he "smiles at the plucky mocking-bird," and he "tries to calm his wife." Mary "differs in many ways," especially in being "very pessimistic"; and in paragraph 6 she is "hysterical."

Section II. 1. The winter season is important in the situation for the first story. Christmas-time is an important part of the setting for the second. The "March" of the third has nothing to do with any element of our interest in the plot.

Section III. The remoteness of the cabin in the forest is the most important part of the setting of the first story, because the journey for food might have been almost as difficult after the snow had melted. Any big city would have answered as well as New York for the place in which to spend thirty dollars, and any suburb would have furnished the movies to which the family went. Place is important in the story of the consumptive, because he had gone to California for the sake of the climate; yet Colorado or Arizona would have done as well.

IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES, PAGE 140

The *Britannica* article "Mountaineering" tells us that "systematic mountaineering, as a sport, is usually dated from Sir Alfred Wills's ascent of the Wetterhorn in 1854." The top of Mont Blanc was never reached till 1786, and before 1700 it would appear that climbing a mountain was only the very unusual effort of some peculiarly daring scientist. Such facts, while not furnishing theme material for a class in high school, will indicate that the picture might lead an imaginative mind anywhere.

Whatever kind of subject is undertaken, the requirement for treating it cannot vary: "to have one purpose, to plan for one effect."

ADDITION TO LESSON 19

This is the first of four "Additions" to Lessons. They are storerooms of topics and of ways of finding topics. Regard them as material which may be needed some time to supplement theme work, but which is on no account to be taken as regular lessons unless a class is showing marked ability and needs to have its powers stretched. The other "Additions" follow Lessons 24, 25, and 27.

I add here a few examples of newspaper reports which would furnish material for stories, or for other types of theme. No diligence is required to gather dozens of such items, presumably true, which are more remarkable than fiction would dare to be.

> Old-time robbers sat down with members of the Clergy Club at a luncheon at the Hotel Astor yesterday. The luncheon quickly developed into a love-feast and experience meeting at which the ecclesiastical hosts were addressed frequently as "you fellows," and were told how they could help stop the "crime wave."
>
> Milton and Holden L'Ecluse, 10 and 14 year old sons of Milton L'Ecluse, were digging in the sand in front of the L'Ecluse estate here yesterday when they came upon an old tin can. With childish curiosity they pulled it from its hiding place and to their amazement found it filled with precious stones and jewelry. Running into the house, they confronted their mother with the treasures, which later were found to be worth $10,000.
>
> The mother recalled that on Sept. 7 thieves had entered the rooms of Henry C. Willcox, Vice President of the American . . .
>
> "Uncle Robert," the year-round Santa Claus to the poor and unfortunate, will be the host at a "party" at Welfare Island Sunday, Dec. 16, when he will entertain the 3,200 inmates of the City Home and distribute presents among them. There will be a program by the Police Glee Club and the "Uncle Robert Minstrel Troupe" of Public School 109, composed of boys from 9 to 11 years old. "Uncle Robert" will pass out pipes and tobacco and checkerboards to the men and handkerchiefs and knick-knacks to the women. This will be the first of a series of pre-Christmas parties to be given various public institutions throughout the city by "Uncle Robert," who modestly hides his identity.
>
> Little Jimmy Glass was returned last evening to his home in Jersey City—dead. The famous search which began nine years ago in a remote village in Pike County, Pa., and the trails of which had traversed 48,000 miles into many lands, terminated yesterday where it began, in Greeley, Pa., only a mile and a half from where the four-year-old boy last was seen alive.

While walking along Rockaway Beach yesterday morning Frank Pick, who lives at the resort, noticed a green bottle which had been washed in by the waves. The top of the bottle was sealed and inside was a piece of white paper. Pick broke the neck and read the following message on the paper:

"This bottle was cast into the sea at Kingstown in the County of Dublin, Ireland, on the 4th day of December, 1882, by Elizabeth Kinch, Pave Lane, Kingstown, age 18 years. Hope some nice boy finds and returns it to me."

Although the probabilities were that Miss Kinch found a "nice boy" long since, Pick said he would inform the sixty-year-old woman that the bottle had ended its journey.

Sixteen-year-old Norma Niblock, of Toronto, Ont., had a great deal to be thankful for when she awakened in the regal beauty suite of the Waldorf Astoria yesterday.

To begin with she had had a perfectly gorgeous week in New York and Washington with special trains, private automobiles, theaters, parties an' everything.

In the second place the memory was still poignantly fresh of being adjudged the "most beautiful girl in America," and being so crowned before an admiring crowd of thousands by no less a heart crusher than Rodolph Valentino.

"There's a woman down here, judge, that has a Thanksgiving dinner to cook . . . . 31 people coming to her house . . . . accidental felonious assault as I see it . . . . yes, I'll guarantee her presence in court . . . . thanks judge."

LESSON 20

The previous experience of the class has probably been that "telling a story" is an exercise in speaking distinctly, with assurance, without much *and* or *so*. Perhaps some in your class cannot do much more than that now. Don't expect much or try to set the gage of achievement suddenly up to several notches above what the class can reach. But set it, if possible, a little higher than it has ever been before. Pull students up as far as you can toward the point where an oral theme is practice in delivering a constructed composition, that is built by the careful architecture of written work.

LESSON 21

There has been of late years a very wholesome protest against the "four forms of discourse"—narration, description, exposition, and argument. I have been among the protesters, and I am sure that much

poor teaching has been done on the basis of this classification. Professional writers are not able to tell the difference between description and exposition or between stories and narratives. An ordinary essay or editorial is not a "type of discourse," but reasons by the use of narration or description or exposition, or by a blend of all of them. It follows, therefore, that a teacher who thinks the school types are realities teaches fanciful unrealities.

But these facts do not prove anything about a school method of teaching composition. Just as a school may find it wise policy to set up temporary artificial standards of sentences and paragraphs, in order to teach with economy and emphasis, so it may be wise economy to use the artificial "types" in our teaching. All depends upon what experience shows. My own experience is that small harm is done by using the types and that a great deal of good is insured. The gain is not a knowledge of types, for that is mental lumber; it is a knowledge that every composition should be animated by some one *purpose*. Everybody concedes that *purpose* is essential.

If, for one example, an untrained boy is to write a theme about a ghost, his thoughts scatter; he may describe, in the compass of one theme, a ghost that he once saw at a seance, give a narrative of what happened before and after the seance, argue that a belief in spirits is sensible, and conclude with a paragraph that is a climax of a story about a lost bracelet pointed out by a spirit. If this student had been made aware of the "types" of composition, he would not have been impeded by the knowledge, would not have felt constrained to write "description" or "argument." He would have asked himself at the outset, "What am I about? What do I want to do? Do I want to invent some fiction? Shall I tell people clearly just what happened? Shall I show these scoffers that spiritualism is sensible? What is to be my one purpose?" He knows how to direct himself in composition. If teaching the four types secures that result it seems to me a wise method.

If the method is used unwisely, so that it makes a student suppose he must always manufacture one of the types, then it is silly. If it is supposed to embody an academic truth about literature, it is silly. But if the method is a useful half-truth that is helpful in pedagogy, it is admirable. It should be explained to students as a mere kind of training which, like practicing scales on a piano, is a way of acquiring facility. The types are not the stuff of our teaching; what we secure is the power to decide on a course of action and to follow it with an eye single to that one purpose. The teacher's emphasis should be, as it is on page 148, "We do not need to bother our heads with theoretical differences, but we should always be intent on having one definite purpose."

I have not liked to seem radical by teaching "stories" as practically a fifth type of composition, but a piece of fiction containing a plot is so different from a narrative of fact that I find the distinction clarifying. On page 148 I have satisfied the academic tradition by saying that a story is a subdivision of narration, but in practice I never speak of classification; I talk about the purpose in telling of facts as they happened, the purpose of surprising a reader with a turn of plot.

The longer I observe the effects of theme-making, the more I grow afraid of mere narrative. It is almost an invitation to be formless and without purpose. I insist on some obvious purpose in narrative, a plan of coming, story-like, to some climax. Much harm can be done by allowing a student to ramble on and on with a sequence of events; such composition is weak, and it encourages weakness. See page 149. For an illustration of the way types should be minimized see page 162, where the Fairfax narrative is called a description.

Question 3 of the Exercise is the most important one, because it minimizes the emphasis on type and exalts the purpose. Question 4 should enforce Lesson 15, on emphasis in the paragraph. See "End of themes" in the Index.

Comments on the Selections

1. The time order of the three selections. (1) Tom and the captain try to clear the coil of rope; then I try; but I am caught by the wrist; I am drawn overboard; I am dragged down into the depths; I go on down, down. (2) First I see the afflictions of the man; then a doctor is sent for; then I describe, in order of time, what the doctor did (took the man to an outroom, laid him on a bench, bound him, made a smoke under his mouth, kept him there); after the smoking there is no result; when no result appears, the three characters are abashed, afflicted, and wondering. (3) First there is a description of how Lord Fairfax looks now; then the second sentence carefully takes us back to his youth by saying "However ungainly his present appearance" and by using the pluperfect "had figured." From here on the time order is strictly followed, unless the London days were after Oxford: "afterwards" he had a commission in the Blues, wrote for the *Spectator;* "at the height of his career" he fell in love; the wedding was arranged for; she broke the engagement; "from that time" he avoided the sex; he "ultimately" abandoned the gay world; he buried himself in America.

2. Place order in the three selections. (1) The scene is in the boat, through which the coil of rope is whipping swiftly; then it is "overboard"; then deep in the water. (2) The man is first in one room, and then is taken to "an outroom." (3) First comes Fairfax's life in England, then in America.

3. The purpose of the first is to describe the thoughts of eternity while there was a stream of fire whizzing past my eyes and a roaring as of thunder in my ears. (If the student is required to use some of the terms used by the author, he is usually better taught, because he has to observe just what the author says.) The purpose of the second selection is to show how this effort to smoke out the devil impressed me, made me wonder. The purpose of the third selection is to show how it happened that such a man as Lord Fairfax lived in such a place as the Colonies.

4. "Meeting my God" is the most impressive of the thoughts about the future life and shows what kind of thoughts he had about eternity and sin. "Wondering and fearing" shows the result of the whole

effort to smoke out the devil. "Buried in the wilds of America" impresses on us the strangeness of the fact that such a man should live in America—that is, Irving wanted to show how remarkable it was that the young Washington should have had contact with an English aristocrat of the gay world.

LESSON 22

Some teachers make a fetish of outlines. How far wrong we may be in expecting too much of outlines is evident from a revelation that was once made to me when I questioned a number of boys about their methods. Every one of them had been required for two years to furnish an outline of every theme; their ability to write orderly themes was high; I was a devotee of outlines as a wonder-working system. One day a good writer smilingly confessed to me that he always made his outline after he had completed the theme. When I had somewhat recovered from the shock he gave me, I asked another boy, and another, and another. Yes, most of them considered outlines as a bothersome school requirement, something to be written out and affixed to a composition after the construction was complete. Only a few boys faithfully tried to previse their full plan and follow out the program of outlining that is universally recommended in textbooks. All the best writers were a unit in turning the program upside down.

What would you do if confronted with such a revelation? Would you exhort successful theme-writers to mend their ways and be orthodox? I am not so devout as that. I am dreadfully afraid of running counter to facts. I told the boys that I was learning something and that producing satisfactory composition was, after all, their affair. If their results were excellent, who shall say that the venerable faith in preliminary outlines is true?

In my own case there was another strong reason for being cautious in the face of facts: I have seldom found a preliminary outline of any use in my own composition. If, as happens once in a great while, I have several dozen items to classify and place in a series of paragraphs, I have to group them in advance, because I cannot carry them all in mind. But this is no more than a mechanical assortment of data; it is not a matter of composition. For ordinary marshaling of thoughts through a series of paragraphs I have not the prophetic vision to foresee what the whole structure is to be. When my main purpose is clearly defined and an objective chosen and a start-off made, I never can tell what the steps are to be. New thoughts and illustrations, which could not be summoned to a cold imagination, come flocking to the brain that is warmed in action; a new kind of emphasis or a better tone develops subconsciously; the design that I had dimly anticipated turns itself other-end-to. The power of "prevision" is one that I covet, but it is too high, too wonderful for me. I am unable to stir up the possibilities when I am at a distance from them; I cannot see what they are until I have taken off my coat and plunged into them.

Still I do not consider outlines less necessary than I used to think them. A teacher may have given to himself the wrong reason for a

faith, but may find that some other reason is the actual basis. Reasons count for little, except as they enable us to work more intelligently. What counts is the fact of observation that, somehow or other, outlines are a force which makes for improvement. So far as I can analyze the power of outlines, it is this: Outlines are a concrete way of advertising the necessity of structure; they are a constant reminder that architecture is demanded in composition and that every good theme *can be* outlined. That, I suppose, is the virtue of outlines.

So it may be that the stressing of "knows in advance," at the bottom of page 152, is an overstatement. Professionals do not always see a whole course in advance. But they do see what they are headed for and about how far away it is, and they know that they must advance to the goal in a straight line; the advice to students represents the major truth that is useful to them.

Examples of "absurdly long outlines," like that on page 153, have been seriously printed in textbooks. To me they seem like rhetorical nightmares. If you have found them actually useful in teaching paragraph structure, advise the class that the outline of the whole paragraph is not absurd, but that some outline could conceivably be long enough to be laughable.

The outline at the bottom of page 154 is numbered in an unusual way: the subtitles indicating paragraphs are seriatim. I think this would be a good innovation, but it is a novelty, and I have not suggested it elsewhere.

I do not recall any outline in which subheads for divisions of a paragraph were helpful, though I can conceive such a case. I make the statement in deference to the opinions of many teachers. My own fear of subheadings within a paragraph is that they will distract the student from his one paragraph topic.

Comments on the Exercise

The comment on this Lesson has been largely on how mature or able minds work and about topics that are somewhat imaginative. There is a different sort of theme—the longer essay that arranges information. Outlines for these are more obviously essential. See the comment on Lesson 26.

Outline of "Mosquitos" in Lesson 24. It is better tactics to show that all the items of the second paragraph reinforce the one topic of "overcoming obstacles" than it is to chart each kind of obstacle as a separate numbered subhead, for the latter method will not leave with the student the notion of paragraph unity. It is well to show that "themselves" in the last sentence of the third paragraph does not interfere with the general topic of "beasts." The topics are: (1) The clouds of bloodthirsty mosquitos in the north, from July tenth to August tenth. (2) How they overcome every obstacle to get at their human victims—smoke, mosquito-bars, veils, and pologs. (3) How they make some places uninhabitable for even the beasts.

Outline of "Electrons." Emphasize that the first sentence is carrying a reader over from a previous paragraph, that the topic is an-

nounced in the second sentence, and that from there on all our attention is centered on "how fast they travel." The second paragraph ends with "enormous velocity," but that is only a descriptive phrase to recall the previous paragraph; the business of the second paragraph is to say that "glowing bodies bombard everything in their neighborhood."

Outline of "How salmon live and die": 1. Romance of the struggle to live. 2. Feeding and growth in the ocean. 3. Indomitable energy of the journey up stream. 4. Eggs laid at the spawning grounds. 5. Weak and disfigured, the old salmon die. 6. The long journey of the fry to the ocean—and return.

Outline of "My section is best": 1. Conceding the ugliness. 2. A stranger can't see the beauty. 3. Though ugly, the section is best. 4. The June laurel is beauty. 5. The charm of the green forest in midsummer. 6. The charm of the autumn foliage and haze. 7. The charm of the winter snow. 8. Beauty at all times. 9. Even if beauty does not make a place best, it is best because of the love of home. (Logic is thrown to the winds here; the paragraph deserts the whole logic of the theme.)

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 156

On page 195 I have tried to picture, at some length and emphatically, the futility of "just talking a while."

The advice most needed for a successful treatment of "I think you ought to" is to be sure of a polite tone and a deferential approach. Making an attack upon the person who "ought" to is worse than bad manners; it is the sure way to antagonize him and confirm him in his wrong course. A good example of skill and tact in opening an "ought to" plea is this beginning of a letter that Charles Kingsley wrote to a boy who was wilfully choosing wrong studies. Kingsley was an old and beloved friend of the boy's family and was respected by the boy; he could well have taken a firm tone. But he did infinitely better.

> My dear Kennion:
>
> It is with reluctance that I write on the subject of your studies; as, in the first place, I have no right to give an opinion; and, in the next, I quite feel the truth of what you say in your letter to your mother—that none can decide for you a question with all the bearings of which none but yourself can be acquainted. She is extremely anxious, however, that you should decide rightly, and has written to me to ask what I think. So I am sure you will not think that I am intruding advice.

LESSON 23

I am a great believer in "poking fun at names." We all find it easy to talk volubly about names, and to forget the question in the last line of page 159—"Do you know coherence when you see it?" Isn't

it true that we have all been relying on a smooth recitation about the virtue of coherence and not worrying enough about recognizing incoherence when it stalks into our composition? No trait of the boy mind is more provocative of sarcasm than its fondness for reciting what the book says about emphasis and its indifference to the unemphatic close of its own theme. And why should we limit that remark to the poor boys? They are much like the rest of us. Put no faith in the rehearsal of definitions; depend only on the ability to tell the difference in any given theme between unity and lack of unity.

The matter of proportion, which is more advanced and subtle than the other three qualities, is treated at length in Lesson 48.

Comments on the Exercises

Exercise 1. The theme, as a whole, lacks unity because it tells too much about the sun and earth in the second paragraph and devotes nearly the whole last paragraph to the appearance of the earth.

Exercise 2. The first paragraph is incoherent because it tells of our lightness, of volcanos, of the contrast of shadows and light. From "brightness and inky-black" of the first paragraph we jump to "three stages of development," and from the "difference in size" of the second paragraph we jump to "one of the weirdest spectacles."

Exercise 3. The first sentence destroys emphasis because it announces a topic and then withdraws it. In the second paragraph our attention is drawn away from the moon to the size and heat of the sun. The last paragraph directs our attention to how the earth would look from a distance. "Till some other trip" is a typical example of spoiling the close of a theme by a meaningless reference to some other or some unreal subject.

Exercise 4. The first third of the theme is devoted to gravity and lack of atmosphere; the middle third is a comparison of the moon with the sun and the earth; the last third tells how the earth looks from the moon.

LESSON 24

The strongest reason against the teaching of the types of discourse has been the injudicious treatment of description. Description has been idolized as the art of creating a picture of still life. Such an art can be found in certain passages of literature—for example, in novels to show readers a setting. But as a school exercise it has been dubious, and has often resulted in dead assemblings of words about "my home" or "a moonlight scene." There have been beautiful exceptions. I recall a three-hundred-word theme that a California boy once wrote for me in which he described a sunrise in the coast mountains, a theme that was an honest expression of the beauty and wonder he felt during an hour of lifting fog and coming sun. Yet it is a general truth that much description in our schools has been a false kind of effort.

Even in the case of the sunrise theme there was a time element;

there was a narrative of the movement of the fog. This narrative effect is difficult to secure, because the ordinary student will insensibly convert his theme into pure narrative, and so follow a purpose that he did not intend.

The purpose that I have found most effective in a descriptive undertaking is to show the life and movement of some one spot at some one minute. Limiting the time and place seems to steer a student toward the best effect. Urging him to tell about life, movement, and varied elements of the one moment guides him well. An illustration is a topic that was a favorite with me for several years: "The schoolroom door at 7:29." This was an animated scene of an assembly before breakfast in a boarding-school, for taking attendance. Boys came in slowly and sparsely from 7:25 to 7:28; then came the limit of our picture: boys rushed for the door; boys stood just outside, adjusting ties; a teacher was watching for offenders who passed the threshold in disorderly dress; ten seconds before the marking-bell was to ring wild rushers came with thanksgiving; when the bell rang, some poor fellow had a foot on the threshold, but was ruled late. All this made one limited scene, of very brief duration, with endless features of human interest. Many a boy, amused at the chances here offered and aware that he must "stay within the minute," learned a heap about description by the building of one theme.

The usefulness of description in real life is to convey information about "how things are," "what the condition is." No true explanation can be made except by way of description. If Burke had not described conditions in the colonies, he would not have made much of an argument. It often happens that the most effective part of a skilful plea in trial is an emotional description; read to the class Webster's description of the assassination of Captain White, if you are not afraid of giving them hysterics.

The "story effect" must be urged with caution; it is an excellent servant in description, but is likely to become the master. For an illustration of how it misleads in exposition see "The Unfortunate Lemonade Stand," page 177.

Comments on the Exercise

Section I

1. In the first paragraph of "Mosquitos" we begin with "the tenth of July," then read "in three or four days," and then read "until the tenth of August." (In the third paragraph "the month of July" is not back-tracking in time, but is merely a handy way of indicating the period from July 10 to August 10.) In "Electrons" there is first an indication that "we have now reached this conclusion and now have a curiosity"; in the last paragraph we "see, then," after the speed has been shown.

2. "As far north as Kolyma," near the end of the first selection, is a clear indication of going farthest north for a climax. In the second

selection we are first inside of the flame, seeing the speed of electrons; then we are outside, seeing how the electrons bombard objects beyond the flame.

3. In the sketch of Fairfax we first hear of his younger days in London and Oxford, then the matter that is most important in his social career, a commission in the Blues; then he has access to the best society, and we hear of "at the height of his career." After this comes what is by far the most important item in his life, the change in character and conduct which sent him to exile in America.

4. In the account of the possessed man one sentence describes the affliction; four sentences narrate the effort to remove the devil; one sentence tells of the effects produced on three minds. There is a decided story effect, because we are interested in the afflicted man and in the "doctor"; we sympathize and are curious about the result—we care. Query: Do students sympathize with the doctor, or do they think he is a quack who ought not to succeed? He was not a quack by seventeenth-century standards.

Section II

Ask the class whether they can make out whereabouts on the tongue of land the cabin stood. First we sweep along the peninsula to the point, then build a dock close to the cabin (wherever that is), then tell of the roughness on the lake and the accident while we were building, then (or can we prove that this was later?) cut a trail (where was this? across the base of the peninsula?); we speak of the trip by water around the point, and then clear the ground near the cabin. Perhaps the climax is not so bad; making the clearing as neat as possible is a significant close. But it is a minor item, and rather out of keeping with all the strenuous projects of making a cabin and trail and dock.

ADDITION TO LESSON 24, PAGE 168

The Addition is merely supplementary material that may come in handy some time. For an explanation of its purpose and use see the comment on the Addition to Lesson 19. The material in the Additions is really of the nature of the Lessons in the Second Division—that is, it supplements and extends the more elementary teaching of the regular lessons.

A PROFESSOR OF RADIO, PAGE 172

I know of no reason for doubting the truth of the legend provided by the firm that sold the photograph. It seems to me a capital example of the stimulating idea that most of us can profess some small field of knowledge if we have a little industry and ambition.

LESSON 25

Our chief fault in teaching school exposition has been that we have depended too much on a mere listing of the steps in a process, a mere setting down of a series of matter-of-fact descriptions. Such a theme explains little, and it is not infused with a good purpose; it is not likely to be a unified structure. "Explaining the nature of" is a different matter—more entertaining, more difficult, more useful, a better preparation for the demands of real life.

The second paragraph of the Lesson well shows the difference between teaching types and teaching purpose. Who cares whether the paragraph about the merino sheep is description or exposition? It is either one you choose to call it. But what is its purpose? It tries to *explain why* this kind of sheep is so valuable. The "story" of salmon is an excellent narrative; its purpose is to show *the nature of* the life of this kind of fish. Some day it is going to occur to the world of scholarship that "taking pains to bring out the lively interest" (page 176) is a necessity in exposition. At present it is regarded as rather bad form by scientists and researchers.

A teacher catches his breath as he imagines what would take place in the mind of any student who entered into the spirit of the Exercise by trying to "solve his teaching problems." Many a student can and will do this; many cannot do it very well. We must not expect too much and must be prepared for disappointment; but we may hope that some of the better minds in the class will catch sight of new possibilities in their composition work.

Is "I thought you said" prevalent in your school? If it is not, you are so lucky that you can discard question 8. If it is a commonplace, drive home the lesson. A class studies better whenever it sees that a book has hit at a well-known localism.

Comments on the Exercise

1. The first six paragraphs of dialog have very little to do with explaining a business enterprise, though they do give us the setting in lively fashion; and the dinner-bell interruption is certainly not of any use. Why did the boys not foresee that the shade of the tree would move and that there would be no customers passing their stand? This innocent short-sightedness makes the theme sound as if the enterprise was not a business at all. It is a narrative of "what we did one day." 2. Indeed the theme succeeds in one way: it is a rather spirited narrative of "an unbusinesslike day." 3. The theme is well unified on the topic of "an unplanned enterprise." 4. The time order is beyond reproach; there is no fault to find with the coherence in any respect, except possibly with the abrupt shift of topic at "After finding some bright-colored paint." 5. The first third takes us only as far as beginning to build the stand; at the end of the second third we are no farther on in business than the completion of the stand; and most of the last third is taken up with moving the stand. So nearly all of the

theme is a description of "preparing a place of business where no business could possibly be done." 6. The last paragraph is emphatic in the facts it gives, though the wording is listless. It fully explains our failure. 7. I asked you to explain how much it cost to make and market lemonade, and why there was a profit or a loss. But you have not so much as mentioned lemonade; you tell a story of "we had nothing to sell and no place to sell it." This is not a business, but a failure to think of any business facts. 8. Probably the reply would be, "Oh, I thought you meant we should tell about some time when we wanted to make money."

ADDITION TO LESSON 25, PAGE 179

This may be useful at times as pasturage for students who complain that they "can't think of anything to write about." I once found that a pamphlet of theme topics was being passed about surreptitiously, as a kind of immoral "trot," in a ninth-year class—so much did the boys hanker for a display of possibilities. The writer of the A, B, C, and D skit was Professor H. A. Beers of Yale.

Encyclopedia topics are likely to be deadly, because so few students have the power of digesting information and transferring it into a human expression of what is vivid and entertaining in their own minds. If a student has a little of the ability to assimilate and vivify, the encyclopedia is a good place to forage.

LESSON 26

It is literally true, for you or me or anyone, that if we have to select material from a big pile and have to compact what we select in small compass, we need to guide ourselves by an outline. Also it may be true—I think it is—that most students below the top ten per cent of a class are better taught by a requirement to outline such a subject in advance. One reason alone, familiar to all of us, is almost conclusive: the common failure (described on page 182) to apportion time. Students very commonly plead, as if they had a legitimate grievance, that "there was no time to finish" or that "I got way over on to page three before I realized where I was." No such heedless waste of effort is excusable if a student has been taught to outline in advance.

The principal virtue of an outline for a mass of material is that it guides to proportion. Hence I strongly favor the plan shown on page 184 of indicating in parentheses the fractional part that each division is expected to occupy. See in this connection "Think of the minutes and pages," page 354.

The outline of "The Orange Industry" is not proposed as an ideal; quite the contrary. The questions on page 182 and 183 may prove the most valuable part of the lesson.

"An outline can only indicate what some brain works out" (page 183). There is no question that many students acquire a confidence in an outline as if it were a talisman that insured the virtues of composition. Scribbling an outline can become an almost automatic process, which has no relation to purpose. Unless a writer thinks through his subject, unless his outline is a record of what he has thought, it is of no account whatever.

EXERCISE I. The outline of the Chapter is as follows:

I. Outlines for long themes
   1. Should show proportion
   2. Should be criticized for proportion
   3. Narrow the subject

II. Outlines for shorter themes
   1. Must show a real line of thought
   2. Must show the order of topics
   3. Must show the grouping for proportion

Number 3 under I might be called one of three major divisions, because it does not explain outlining, but teaches a matter suggested by the outline that is spread before us. It is closely connected with the topic of long themes and concludes that section of the lesson.

EXERCISE II. It would be hard to exaggerate the good that might be done by several exercises of this sort. The principal weakness of students in the upper years of high school is often said to be "that they can't learn from printed pages." The complaint most often made of college student is that they have small power to make a digest of what they read—which only means that they have not been trained to detect what each paragraph is about, how related paragraphs are grouped, and what the steps of the whole treatment are. They cannot be trained by exhortation, but only by some such specific assignments as outlining chapters.

LESSON 27

The difficulty of argument has never been sufficiently recognized. To be sure, there is a way of proving that argument is easy, for ingenious teachers in the seventh grade have roused spirited discussion that was kept within bounds and that resulted in what could be called argument. But any step above that stage of "telling what I think and why I think so" is not to be regarded lightly. An attempt to persuade someone demands an exercise of a fine art. If you should search through the files of the English papers of an examining board, you would learn that good arguments are scarce.

If we are to make any approach to the art, we have the best chance of success by seeking out the most concrete advice that is most generally true. When I tell students, on page 187, "the great secret of argument," I am not theorizing. Though this advice has never been prominent in textbooks and might seem a crotchet of mine, it appears to hold true of most composition that is persuasive, and I can testify that it has power for good in boys' minds. I have never seen it fail. Time and again I have watched this one precept of "begin on the

other fellow's side'' produce a lasting benefit in some artless mind that would never have reached the secret without such aid. Try it.

Another recommendation, which may also appear somewhat novel, is that good argument ought to center on one reason. All published advice that I have seen, though it may talk about unity, conveys the impression that argument is a process of setting up, one after another, a job lot of reasons. ''Now my fourth point is,'' say the school debaters. I will not tilt against such an accepted method as making a fourth point. I will record, however, that a boy always seems to progress faster in argument if he can be persuaded not to make a fourth point, or even a third or a second. He will be more effective if he focuses on one point and makes all his reasons culminate in that one. In Burke's extended argument for conciliation there is no fourth point; in effect there is only one point. All the descriptions and arrays of numbered reasons display the one reason. Unity appears to me a greater virtue in argument than anywhere else.

Of course ''My Section Is Best'' is, technically, not an argument. The question is not debatable. But I have seen this theme do good and have never seen it cause misunderstanding. Its form and spirit are persuasive.

''Did Peary Reach the North Pole?'' is rather mystifying to some people and rather unpleasant to others. I need only say that I was as much antagonized by Captain Hall's book and as incredulous about its argument as any admirer of Peary could be; I have always been pro-Peary and anti-Cook. But the book is persuasive; it is a powerful argument. The selection from it is a precious example for a textbook because it is likely to rouse angry feelings. ''Why,'' exclaims Mildred Smythe indignantly, ''I don't believe Peary was a faker.'' But what answer can we conceive to this argument about arctic travel? The figures are not to be questioned. Captain Hall's honesty is not to be questioned; he is as fine an old gentleman as you could hope to meet, who has a manufacturing business in Omaha; in early life he commanded a whaling vessel to northern waters.

An indignant student is likely to forget that this is a lesson in argument. It is curious to see how older people will fire up at the mere sight of an argument against the side in which they believe. *Theme-Building* is not maligning Peary or advertising West Virginia mountains; it is a textbook in composition. If it rouses any resentment in young minds, it is disposing them to argue. ''It is no use to squirm or cry. What are you going to do with this argument?'' The only motive to earnest argument is a wish to abolish some opinion. ''Oh, shucks,'' exclaims Bill Browne, ''this West Virginia girl doesn't know what argument is. She just raves about the perfectly lovely scenery.'' Bill is on the verge of making a good argument. Whenever you can stir up indignation, you have a source of compositions that aim to persuade.

One set of answers to the questions in the Exercise: 1. It succeeds because it makes a strong appeal to the pride the audience feels in its own school, and thus disposes the audience not to be offended by the charge that there is much cheating in the school. 2. He favors the honor system because he thinks that ''an appeal to the honor of all'' would succeed (par. 2). He regrets that nothing is said about dishon-

esty (par. 3), speaks of "necessity of being honest" (par. 4), of being "on his honor" (par. 5). 3. Since nothing is said about dishonesty, students are trained not to think of the moral question. 4. The paragraph does not show why and does not speak of discussing the honor system, but only of discussing the necessity of being honest. 5. The pupil is on his honor, and yet he signs a statement that he has not acted dishonorably. Honorable people do not assert that they have not lied or stolen or cheated. (Yet it is the fact that honor systems do require such signed statements.) 6. The climax simply makes the assertion of the glorious results that will follow; but the proof has been supposed to be made previously, and the climactic sentence would be called a good and strong one by most judges of school composition. 7. We find no facts whatever; all is hope and trust and theory. What is needed is examples of honor systems that have succeeded. 8. The great weakness is the assumption that "an appeal to honor will cure all the ills." Not a particle of proof is offered. One who refutes should cite examples of the failure of the honor system and show how it has been known to induce a worse kind of cheating than the original.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 195

"Structure, structure, structure." Unless a teacher uses this idea three times as often as the book does, the class will not realize what the heart of its year's work is. "If you wish to advance, *you* must increase your skill in structure." No book or teacher can give the increase. Improvement is a matter of what *you* do in your own mind. Are you dozing, or are you always challenging the structure of each theme that you hear?

ADDITION TO LESSON 27, PAGE 197

In recent years Yale, Harvard, and Princeton have debated topics that undergraduates feel direct interest in. They have sometimes quit solving the world's hugest problems and have talked about matters with which they have some direct contact and in which their emotions are enlisted. There is the key of all school searching for topics. Look among your own differences of opinion in your own daily life, "Look in thy heart and write" is more necessary for argument than for poetry.

COCOANUTS ON THEIR WAY TO AMERICA, PAGE 200

Many school curriculums now include such an informational course as "Industry and Trade" or "Commercial and Industrial Geography." Such a textbook is a mine of material that will open students' eyes to the marvels of our vast organizations for feeding and clothing ourselves. If students contribute the items of a list of what might be on any ordinary dinner-table, if you write the list as they dictate, and if there is some guessing at where the different items come from, many in the class will catch sight of a long prospect which they never saw before.

LESSON 28

The change in all literary styles toward an easy and colloquial tone has been greater since 1900 than we can easily realize. Just as formality in dress has ebbed rapidly in the last ten years, so has formality of diction waned in essays and novels. The stilted tone of textbooks is fast disappearing, and in letters the alteration is even more rapid. If we older teachers cannot overcome our antique prejudices in favor of dignity and courtly diction, we are lost.

It is easy to misinterpret this loss of formality. Take clothes as an example. Though we are abandoning the silk hat and the Prince Albert coat, we are not substituting a cheaper or less artful kind of clothing. The new style, both in garb and words, is more exacting and expensive than the old. It is now, in our "talking" letters, much easier to slip into bad form. The conversational tone is a higher and finer art.

How far the world has gone toward colloquialism in all its intercourse is illustrated by the following sentences quoted from a *Life* editorial:

> Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, feeling the need of some discussion with M. Poincaré about the affairs of Europe, has addressed him in quite a new manner. Instead of talking to him like a diplomat he has talked like one human being to another, and M. Poincaré instead of replying like a lawyer, as has been his wont, has answered him back really quite man to man.

It is not likely that the mode of talking like a diplomat will ever return to the earth. We must adjust to the new mode if we would not be antiquated.

Nor need we feel that our manners have lost ground. To me it seems that the new directness is a delightful and sensible change from the old affectation. Talking directly to a correspondent, as to a personal friend, is a mode of communication that is rooted in the finest convictions of our nature. I like to quote, apropos, this sentence of Emerson's: "The scholar sits down to write, and all his years of meditation do not furnish him with one good thought or happy expression; but it is necessary to write a letter to a friend—and forthwith troops of gentle thoughts invest themselves, on every hand, with chosen words."

Anyhow, whether we quote Emerson in defense or shudder in defiance, it seems to be the fact that the world of business will never again put a premium on the impersonal and conventional. If our young people are to be fitted for life, they must be taught how to be personal and conversational—but always with the warning given at the bottom of page 202 "that advice about being personal may easily be misunderstood." A good example of the wreckage that may come from misunderstanding is the *Playtime* letter on page 203.

The underlying fact of the change in letter style is that we are trying to give up hypocrisy and adopt sincerity. The sincerity advised for thank-you letters is typical of all. And the underlying motive for

us to use in applying the advice is expressed on page 207—the fact that an untrained person cannot put himself on to paper, and that he must learn to work the miracle of making paper talk.

The body of *Theme-Building* is not littered with any review of the mechanics of letter forms. Any review that is needed can be made fully with the *Sentence and Theme* material in the Appendix.

The following is probably the most famous letter of condolence in the English language:

Executive Mansion, Washington,
November 21, 1864

Mrs. Bixby, Boston, Massachusetts,
Dear Madam:

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming, but I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that the Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The letters written for the Exercise will be purposeless and will furnish little training unless the class discussion focuses attention on the question: "What would the old gentleman most like to hear about?" He might be interested, after a fashion, in almost anything a boy or girl wrote—further adventures on the train, the queer accident in driving home from the station, what we had for supper, what my home is like. But surely his chief interest would be in hearing about how glad the family was that someone had befriended one of its members. The description of "what I told the family about the kind man in the car" would be a natural and pleasing way of showing gratitude to him. What father said, what mother's comment was, how little Nannie felt about it—these are the matters that would please him most.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 208

The book says, quite mildly and briefly, that "scattering comment is worse than no practice." A majority of students will not feel the force of that advice unless a teacher repeats once more to them, "This is a demand for structure. A letter will not help to train you, and will not be acceptable as a school task, unless it is *constructed* with care."

LESSON 29

Anyone who will ask a class to write "a letter that must be specific" will have evidence enough for his lifetime that training of this sort can hardly be too insistent. No ordinary student has any conception of carefully detailing the necessary items of exact time, exact number, exact place—and of not dilating on his emotions. In fact no ordinary adult has much of a conception until a few sad experiences have taught him. Recently I heard an Oxford tutor call up the Grand Central Station in New York to request the return of a pair of rubbers he had left on the train a hundred miles from New York; he did not specify which train he had been on; he was so conscious of the particulars of his loss that he had no thought of defining them. It requires considerable imagination to picture an official in the midst of thousands of complaints and to realize that I am a mere atom in the whirlpool that surrounds him. The seemingly matter-of-fact lesson on specific letters will never produce much effect unless a teacher understands that imaginations are being stretched.

All good letter-writing is an exercise of the imagination. It requires that we visualize the person to whom we write, that we envisage his surroundings and prejudices, that we put ourselves sympathetically in his place.

It seems to me that conventional invitations have been strangely overworked in schools. I am told of classes that have to *write* formal dinner invitations! In my life of half a century I have never received an engraved card summoning me to dine, and have seen only one. How many of your students ever will see one? Yet there is one valid reason for teaching the forms of acceptances and regrets: it is mortifying not to know the usual form if we ought to reply conventionally. To teach the form would seem a simple matter, since it consists of just one impersonal sentence. But I have seen many bright boys, somewhat familiar with these social demands, blunder ludicrously after studying a book lesson and after hearing and seeing me expound it at the board. If you are to teach conventional notes at all, don't expect results until you have had several rounds of replying to invitations.

Comments on the Exercises

1. The great point, which will bear endless emphasis, is to specify unmistakably just when and where I left the parcel. We are so conscious of our own doings and movements, and so engrossed with the importance of ourselves, that real imagination is required to visualize how unknown we are in a department store.

2. The form of this invitation was guaranteed correct in 1924; it may contain some old-fashioned particulars in 1930. The engravers will not use any end-of-the-line punctuation, not even the logical comma after *June* or the period at the end. This is an interesting comment on how antiquated are the commas at the ends of lines in writing addresses. A note of regrets should be neatly blocked in the center of the page, preferably written in short lines of about equal length, without dividing words. The street number may be written out, but figures are proper.

Miss Ransom regrets
that a previous engagement
prevents her accepting
the kind invitation of
Mrs. Fisher for the
sixth of June.

107 Amster Road
March sixteenth

The "previous engagement" is not necessarily a statement of fact; it is the common social formula for saying "unable." If there is any explanation to be made—such as illness in the family—it should not go into the one sentence of formal regrets; an informal letter should be written to explain.

3. Class discussion should encourage invention of details and put a premium on forming a clear mental picture of the conditions of the contest. If possible, some local situation should be substituted for the glee-club contest so that the letter may not be written too much in vacuo.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 215

The list of subjects will yield disappointing results unless you have a clear conception of what kind of training you want this assignment to give, and unless you describe clearly to the class what is demanded. Suppose, for example, that you wish a fairly long and thoughtful letter which will contain some reasoning or explaining. If you simply say, "Choose a topic from page 215," a boy could take number 4 and merely catalog the instances of poor telephone service. What subject is most in line with the kind of composition you have in mind? Is it the imaginary situation of number 8 or the dangerously broad uplift of number 9 or the exposition of number 10? Do you wish to assign a given topic, or are you assigning a kind of treatment?

Number 10 is a subject that appears elsewhere in the book and that is much on our consciences today; for any coach-made and home-judged debating is a bad influence. I have recently seen an article advocating that university students should be hired, like referees for football, to judge school debates. Some schools avoid the coaching evil by this plan: a well-known person is chosen to frame a question; he transmits this to the competing schools in sealed envelopes, which are opened 24 hours before the debate; the teams are on their honor to consult no one in preparing the debate, but work up their arguments by themselves in one day. This system puts a premium, not on being coached for *a* debate, but on being coached *in debating*.

LESSON 30

Opinions will always differ as to what constitutes "bad English," and so the ways of handling this Exercise and the kinds of emphasis used must vary. For my own part, I am as much concerned to discourage ignorant judgments against idioms that "don't sound right" as I

am to encourage the finding of real errors. It seems to me harmful procedure to allow unfounded prejudices to be spouted in class as if they had some validity. They have none whatever. No sensible judgment can be rendered against an idiom until a judge has gained wide knowledge by impartially investigating.

The most curious weakness of the average student is that he will gravely pronounce an expression "wrong" or "vulgar" simply because it is common in everyday speech. For example, "a good many weeks" may be supposed to be disreputable because it is commonly heard colloquially. While it may be true that "a good many" is not suited for exalted oratory, it is equally true that it is used by the most impeccable speakers when talking formally to a most impeccable audience. Any student who objects to it is absurdly hypocritical, or else woefully pretentious.

Many eminent professors of English would shrug their shoulders at our objecting to some of the locutions in the Exercise—for example, "fixed up" in sentence 1, "wonderful feeling" in 2, "getting cold" in 5. They would warn us, quite rightly, that every cultured person of their acquaintance habitually says "getting cold." So our handling of colloquialisms must be wary. "Getting cold" and "wonderful feeling" are not wrong; they are tiresome habits of people who never think of using any other expression; we are telling them that "growing cold" and "heartening sensation" are possible ways of breaking up the dreary monotony of *get* and *wonderful.*

Corrections that should be made in the Exercise. 1. Almost always, put up a lunch. 2. Some substitutes for *wonderful* and *nice*—such as *exhilarating* and *cheerful,* or *it is exciting* and *makes you feel happy.* 3. *Manage* or *take care of my booth, if you can* or *if you will.* 4. The ether hardly affected me at all. 5. Alice and I had sat (and perhaps *growing* for *getting).* 6. No change unless the colloquial tone is objected to. 7. I'm not afraid that he won't accept. 8. Some substitute for *awful;* beware of a labored word like *destructive,* for as a matter of fact cultured people don't talk like that when exclaiming about the weather; emphasize that *awful* is not an error, but that we ought to know some substitutes, like *dreadful* or *terrific* or *violent;* use *through* for *among.* 9. Likely to be, fewer worries. 10. If I had not helped. 11. May I, take this book. 12. No error. 13. *Suspected* (*right away* should not be objected to; it is curious to hear students preach against any phrase that is common in speech; they should be taught not to pose in the English class). 14. *Got into* or *reached* or *arrived at,* that was as far as I could go (the first *got* is not wrong, but the repetition of *got* and *get* is bad). 15. To the very remarkable way. 16. I suspect, fewer coats. 17. Lying, wasn't able to see it or had no chance to see it. 18. Into my bedroom. 19. Avoid any stilted substitute for *proposition,* anything that would sound utterly unlike baseball talk. Perhaps some colloquialism like "hard nut to crack" or "too much for us to solve" or "had a mighty puzzling delivery" would serve. So perhaps *awfully* or *mighty* would sound more like honest talk than *exceedingly.* 20. Help wondering, the effect. 21. No error (*don't think* has always been an established idiom). 22. No error. 23. No error. After these three errorless sentences impress the idea that it is worse to make objections

ignorantly than to overlook errors. 24. *Take* or *carry a can,* build a fire. 25. Its destination, to sit down. 26. No error. 27. Each of the boys was so afraid of the other, could hardly make them quit. 28. Can operate a set. 29. Oughtn't to wear, a bad effect (and possibly *do* is used too vaguely). 30. Had lain, sat up. 31. Into the pantry (and it is good exercise to find a substitute for *got,* like *found their way*). 32. Let the dishes stand (or stay or sit), Norda and I. 33. May I use.

LESSON 31

There is something comical in the way some old-line school rhetorics advised the improvement of style by artful repetition, while not giving any warning against the spoiling of style by heedless repetition. Contrived and purposeful repetition is a high rung in the ladder of art; heedless repetition is a common pest that saps vitality in all school composition. I have never found much opportunity to teach students how to climb the ladder; there is perpetual necessity of showing them how to grub the weeds of doubled and octupled words. If your mind has never been much disturbed about heedless repetition in themes, skip Lesson 31, for it can bring no benefit if taught half-heartedly. If you share my feelings, put your stress on pages 224 and 225; pass lightly over page 226.

Yet it is important that a class should have to discriminate, as the Exercise requires, between purpose and sleepiness in repetition. If there were no such explanation as that on page 226, most students would suppose that "it is bad to repeat" and would pronounce the three *lets* in number 6 to be "bad." If they do not learn to distinguish, they will feel that much of the emphasis in literature is "bad."

Comments on the Exercise

1. No sensible writer could have designed to use *before* three times in this sentence. 2. *High* with *highly colored* has a ludicrous sound. 3. *For a while for a time* is clumsy both because of the two *fors* and because of the similar meanings of *while* and *time.* 4. *Coming outcome* can not have been intended. 5. *Waited to be waited on* must be an oversight. 6. The three *lets* are clearly designed for emphasis; so is the repetition of *own.* Our judgment must not be based on whether we like the emphasis; we must grant an author the right to be emphatic in that way if he wants to be. 7. The sentence would not convey the contrast if *sing* were not repeated. 8. It is hard to conceive that the writer meant to repeat *way,* because the repetition does not emphasize anything; the repetition is mere carelessness. So *of thinking* used twice; since the two meanings are somewhat different, there is need not to repeat. 9. The repetition of *ordinary* is clearly for emphasis; to use two different words would distract us from the real thought. A clever student can say that *in short* is clumsy after the three previous *ins* that show position, though the fault is rather slight. 10. This is a typical example of the worst sort of aimless repetition; "after the car the next morning" we hear "the next morning the car." 11. "In early

years in oil-cars'' is not serious, but is worth avoiding; the three *carrys*, the two *petroleums*, and the *oil-cars* and *oil* are quite aimless. 12. The three *sames* emphasize the entire sameness of the man. 13. The three repetitions of *close* give the whole tone of the sentence, which would have none of its force without the repetition. 14. *Plant, plant* is tiresome. 15. If the experiment of not repeating *magic* is tried, the class will discover how the dialog loses force; also the *say* in the last line. The repetitions are well designed. 16. Repetition of *some sort of* is pure sleepiness. 17. *Running, running* is poor. 18. The repetition of *measures* seems well planned, but *give* and *gave* are clumsy. 19. The point of the sentence is in repeating *sane*. 20. The first repetition of *flock* is good and necessary, but saying *third flock* and *third flock* is inexcusable; so is the second *of ducks, quick* and *quicker, got* and *get*.

LESSON 32

If, after you have seen the tenor of the comments on Lessons 32-36, you feel that I am too lax in my notions of pure English, don't condemn me too hastily. These are largely questions of taste, and we know that it is no use to dispute about tastes. I would only say that my ideas did not originate in my own brain, that I am by nature a conservative, and that I should be as much of a stickler for purity as anyone if a great body of wisdom and authority had not made me wary of purism. Do you know Lounsbury's *Schoolmastering the Speech?* It explains very entertainingly my point of view. It displays the folly into which we easily fall if we assume that we know the right rules for idioms and do not take pains to see whether our pet rules have any basis in usage. A reference book, alphabetically arranged, that shows convincingly by references to literature the good sense of Lounsbury is J. Lesslie Hall's *English Usage*. Such books will explain the idolatry of which many teachers of English have been guilty. Any teacher who fights for idols of purity is doing worse than to waste time; he is raising up in his community a distrust of his judgment on all points.

In the first paragraph on page 231 is a census of errors that are common in school writing. It was made by going through some two thousand themes written for the College Entrance Board by students from all sorts of schools in all parts of the country. It is the only estimate of this sort that I have seen. It is one of many recent efforts by teachers and schools of education to find out what particular attacks are most needed and what familiar old attacks do not encounter any common blunders. Until a man has seen the frequency of the unrelated *it*, he cannot credit the importance of this one point of attack on the embattled mistakes of syntax. Till he has counted the disfigurements produced by *not only but also*, he cannot understand how prevalent this form of non-parallelism is.

The description of errors in Lessons 32-36 is decidedly easy. My boys always earn high marks so long as they are reciting piously on how ''bad'' it is to allow participles to dangle. But all their righteousness is naught when the next week's themes come in. The Lessons, and even the Exercises, will amount to little unless teacher and class are resolved that the work shall produce right *habits*.

"Pay attention to the right words" in these Lessons. I have gone farther than any text-maker I know in avoiding the printing of wrong forms. I would on no account ever show a misspelling, or any error that is purely a matter of form. But beyond this limit of avoiding mere wrong *forms* of single words a book must not go too far. It would not be intelligible in discussing syntax if it did not announce what it is talking about. So far as I could I have thrown all the emphasis on the correct combinations of words, as on page 232, where the italicized *were* and *are* and *have* show what is right and do not confuse the student by posting before him both right and wrong constructions. But how shall I tell students about a false plural by attraction unless I show an example of what is meant? Time and again the critics of the old edition and of the copy for the new have told me, "Example needed." They are unquestionably right. No student can visualize "a plural by attraction"; he must see an illustration of the error. I have put the erroneous words in quotation marks wherever possible, "to make them look wrong."

I heartily approve the general formula that "it is bad pedagogy to exhibit wrong forms"; but that dictum is strictly true only when the mere form is involved, as in spelling. The wrong spellings are almost never to be seen in print; they are not a mischief-making influence, and therefore should not be given an artificial prominence. But wrong combinations of words are everywhere to be heard; our training has to correspond somewhat to the sad facts of real life, and must furnish some work in distinguishing the right syntax from the wrong. But we must do all we can to reduce the emphasis on wrong combinations. Imitate the squeamishness of the book as far as you conveniently can; mention what is wrong as cursorily as possible and harp on what is right.

Much of the effectiveness of Lessons 32-36 will depend on the relative emphasis given to the constructions. The book does what it can to throw into relief the ones that seem to me most essential; but I dare not presume to shape the Lessons as if my ideas of relative importance were valid everywhere. Each teacher must make sharp the relief that he thinks advisable. In Section A, for example, the matter of a plural with *there* far outweighs all the other seven points; the question of a singular or a plural with a collective noun is rather academic and petty; the question of singular with *or* and *nor*, while it is much stressed in schools, is, compared with "there was five," a prim nicety. "These kind" and "one of the worst storms that has" are to be heard so often from the lips of cultured people that they cannot be considered in the same rank of badness as "there was five"; they are not in the same class of vulgarity.

Many books and teachers would have us believe that it is wrong idiom to say "heard of a *man* failing"; they suppose that the logic of "man's failing" settles the case and that "man failing" is erroneous. Logic has nothing to do with the case. The fact of usage is, especially in England, that the possessive of a noun is in the majority of cases not needed; it may be a pure affectation. If such logic were applied in all cases, we should have to say "heard of *that's* being done"; but a possessive of *that* is a form that does not exist in our language.

My observation is that a large proportion of careful speakers say "should like to have gone." I have a strong personal animus against such a perfect infinitive and regularly say "should have liked to go," but my prejudice is not a good guide. I had better, in view of the facts of usage, not rely upon it. Quite in a different class of idiom is a *will* or a *would* after *in order that;* a student is abused if he is not taught to use *may* and *might.*

If you assay the fifteen points of syntax made in this lesson, you will find few that are vital, though every one ought to be understood by an A section. Hence my preference would have been to place the few most significant constructions in a first section of the lesson and to advertise the others as much less significant. I should have done so if all teachers would accept my judgments. But they will not. We all have our own very decided opinions and are shocked at the laxity of other teachers. So I must not compel the users of the book to undo its arrangement. I will indicate in the Comments on the next four Lessons what I conceive to be the idioms which deserve most stress. In many cases you will disagree. But you will surely agree with me in the general principle that we shall not be effective unless we make our decisions as to relative importance and spend most of our effort where it is most needed.

The ideal way to use the material of Lessons 32-36 would be to assign some small part that is important in combination with a regular Lesson, to take up one by one these important matters; then, if there is time, to go through the Lessons again for less important parts; and to leave untouched the items about which we feel little concern. Such a use of the Lessons insures emphasis. One point, when discussed by itself, is impressed; twelve points discussed in one recitation are scrambled.

Six years ago I should not have had any more faith in the benefit of "explaining the faults" than you have now if you are a skeptic. I will not attempt any argument of the point, but will only say that my faith in this method was forced upon my very much surprised mind by classroom facts: I discovered that it was difficult to persuade boys to diagnose errors, that they could recast sentences without learning much, and that when I insisted on analysis as the prime requisite I taught them something.

Comments on the Exercise

Criticisms of errors in the Exercise might be as follows: 1. *Has* is used with the relative pronoun *that,* which is plural, since the antecedent, *pickerel,* is plural. 2. *Were* is used with the singular subject, *odor.* 3. *Was* is used with the plural subject *papers.* 4. No error (the singular verb is required with an *either-or* pair like *nail, bolt*). 5. The past tense, *glared,* is used for an action that was complete (perfect) before the time of *looked* in the main clause; *could* is used after *in order that.* 6. No error. 7. No error (for *three dollars* is not a true plural subject, but indicates a price, and should have a singular verb). 8. No error. 9. *I* is used as the object of *to.* 10. *Would* is used after

in order that. 11. *Whom* is used as the subject of *had stolen* (the construction is "we thought who had stolen," which is parallel with "we thought he had stolen"; ask any incredulous student if he would say "we thought *him* had stolen"). 12. *I* is used as the object of *did tell.* 13. *Those* is used to modify the singular noun *sort.* 14. If any student argues that *lot* means "an assorted collection" and ought to have a singular verb, let him have his way. But the fact of good usage is that the plural verb is demanded by the plural idea. Ask the conquering hero who wants "was" whether he would say "there was a hundred things"; the idiom with *lot* is just the same as with *hundred,* and for the same reason. 15. *Who* is used as the object of *to.* 16. *Can* is used after *in order that* (there is a widespread belief that *loud* should always be an adjective, but *loud, louder, loudest* is a well-accredited adverb of ancient lineage). 17. No error (*who* is the subject of *were*—"we supposed who were," "we supposed they were").

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S TRIUMPH, PAGE 238

A good way to use this picture of an eagle would be to make it a "purpose assignment." Each theme should be preceded by a statement, perhaps in not more than one sentence, announcing the purpose that is to be followed out. Boys have been amused and have learned a good lesson when I have told them that the West Point cadets must always preface a recitation with the formula, "I am required to"—and then follows a statement of what they must prove or describe or correct. I have often thought that our school recitation would be better if we adopted that custom. Certainly every theme would be planned under better auspices if we answered for ourselves the queston, "What am I required to do? What is my one purpose?" A picture of an eagle might summon up a thousand purposes. If we blend two of these, we have no theme; if we dissect out one and are true to it, we accomplish something.

LESSON 33

Impersonal *they* and *you* are ancient and honorable idioms, though some teachers rule them out because they are so likely to be overused or to be clumsily combined with a personal use in the same sentence. As for faulty reference, a teacher's appetite for this error always increases by what it feeds on, until an unrelated personal pronoun becomes an obsession. We should step softly and curb our passion, for literature is thick-strewn with rather loosely used pronouns. We must cultivate care in reference, but we should beware of holding up any ordinary fault as a grievous blunder.

Do you share my detestation of "his (Cox's) turn"? Perhaps I am unduly excited against it.

In my estimation the misuses of *it* are far and away the most needful part of the lesson. Carelessness with *it* is more common than with all the other pronouns together.

Comments on the Exercise

A teacher who burns with zeal for the "purity" of our language will hardly understand why "Tell everyone you see to lock up their" is not a despicable error; since it is a logical absurdity and since all textbooks rate it as a vulgar mistake, we are apt to treat it as if it were in the class of "them things." But good usage is not based on logic. It is a fact that "tell everyone . . . . . their" is employed by a large proportion of highly educated people who know all about the objection to the idiom and whose sober judgment is that the idiom is well established. That fact gives me pause when I am about to tell boys that the idiom is wrong. Another fact makes me hesitate even more: the stiff formality of "his" in sentence 1, and its failure to express the real feeling of the speaker, create in boys a distrust for my judgment in all other matters of diction. I cannot bulldoze them into respecting my judgment; I must earn their respect by showing a true knowledge of what language is. Language is not a game made by textbooks; it is an instrument of the great society in which I am a humble member. What that society does is right, and always has been right so long as there has been human speech. I am not a little czar of propriety because I teach English.

So I do not assume to say that "their" is wrong in the first sentence. I say that many worthy people think it is wrong. Also I say that in other combinations this same use of "their" is evidently proof of ignorance. I say that every graduate of a good school ought to know that logic and much authority requires "his" and that in my class "his" is going to be required. It is quite possible that "their" is rapidly becoming standard usage; but it has not yet arrived at that high station.

Descriptions of the errors: 1. *Their* refers to the singular *everyone.* 2. The three *theys,* but especially the second and third ones, are so used that they might refer to either *masons* or *bricks.* 3. No error. 4. *Is* has *reasons* for its subject. 5. There is no antecedent for *it.* 6. There is no antecedent for *it.* 7. *Would* is used after *in order that.* 8. *They* is used impersonally, without any antecedent. This is by no means an error if we are judging by the ordinary standards of good colloquial usage, but it is good practice for students to note whether they really are wise in using a pronoun without an antecedent. 9. The second *they* might refer to either the *people who give* or to the *gloves.* 10. *They* refers to the singular *flat.* 11. *You* refers, or seems to refer, to *me.* The real error is in the shift of construction from the particular *me* to the impersonal *you.* The writer did not mean to make his conclusion refer to his own case alone; he meant that "when I have suffered this injustice, I think he ought not to treat people so." 12. *Have* is used with *bell,* when each *bell* is spoken of separately and

demands a singular verb. 13. The *she* following the quotation might refer to either the speaker or the cat. 14. The third *you,* used impersonally, seems to refer to the very personal *you* that has gone before it; or, better, it is a clumsy shift of reference and construction. The impersonal *you* is hardly an error in itself. 15. All the personal pronouns in the *that* clause are ambiguous, because they might refer to either Gifford or his father. 16. *Has* is used for the plural *hold-ups; has* is used for *that,* which is plural because its antecedent, *crimes,* is plural. 17. Various solutions will be offered by the class. There is no need of the conjunction *that* before the noun clauses. There is not necessarily any wrong idiom in using "and they," because it can be argued that there is a proper pair of noun clauses, equivalent to "[that] the posts were his property and [that] people ought not to use the posts." The only out-and-out error is that *they* seems to refer to *posts;* if *people* were substituted for *they,* the sentence could pass muster. When it comes to recasting the sentence, there is a pretty opportunity to show the simple, oft-advised remedy of a compound verb for one subject will make all shipshape: "that the posts were his property and ought not to be used."

LESSON 34

Whenever a boy's mind is keyed to an artificial pitch, as when he is translating Latin or transforming English sentences, he turns to *which.* In his natural speech he seldom uses *which;* but when he goes on dress parade in writing, he will tell of "a chauffeur which" and "which thing is." Teachers of foreign language tell me that it is difficult to secure a plain, ordinary, human *that* in translation; boys always swing to a pedantic *which.* Poking fun at *which* is a useful pastime.

The matter of restrictive and non-restrictive relatives is a whole chapter in itself. It is only mentioned here, to draw attention to it and to give a teacher the opportunity of showing a class that they are in the bondage of an ignorance that will make them ludicrous. The subject is difficult to teach and has long caused despair; it is sometimes postponed to the senior year. You must decide to teach it with some thoroughness or not to touch it at all. Half-way measures will waste time.

The repeated preposition of paragraph 23 is a gross error; the blunders of paragraphs 24-28 are slight in comparison.

Every teacher knows the abuse of *when* and *where,* especially for definitions. The error is commonly attacked in the seventh year, but seems to survive, uninjured, in the speech of most college graduates.

Comments on the Exercise

1. The noun *satisfaction* is defined by a *when* clause. A true definition would be in the form of "Satisfaction is the feeling that, or the condition of." 2. No error. 3. There is no construction of *that.* The

reconstruction of the sentence is by no means easy; one solution is "that are fastened by one pull on a knob and that don't have to be buckled." 4. *Has* is used with *that,* which is plural because its antecedent, *antiseptics,* is plural. 5. *Was* is used for the plural subject, *chap* and *farmer; which* refers to *farmer* (incidentally, it seems at first glance to refer to *overalls*). 6. A *where* clause is used to name what was in the paper; it has no antecedent. 7. No error. *Them* refers properly enough to people mentioned in a previous sentence. 8. *Of* is used twice with only the one object, *which.* 9. *Will* is used after *in order that.* 10. No error. Would some over-nice students prefer a subjunctive *were* in place of *was*? Such a subjunctive would destroy the point of the sentence; the meaning is "unless there actually was"; it is not contrary to fact. 11. No error. 12. *But which* is used without any previous *but.* 13. *Are* is used to refer to the singulars *one* and *other,* which are used separately and ought to have a singular verb. 14. The conjunction *that* is used twice before the same noun clause. The second one should be omitted. 15. The conjunction *that* is omitted before a noun clause in apposition with *superstition;* the sentence feels as if there was a hole before the clause. 16. Since there is no comma before *which,* the sentence means "that particular Cincinnati which is smokier than Pittsburgh, but not all the other Cincinnatis." 17. The sentence seems to say that "we did our hoping when Aunt Carrie came," whereas it must mean that "we did our hoping before she appeared"; the *when* clause must be intended to modify *would bring* in the noun clause that is the object of *hoped.* Hence a *that* has been omitted at the beginning of the noun clause, where it belongs, and has been confusingly inserted after the *when* clause. 18. A *where* clause is used to define the noun *corduroy road;* the noun should be defined by some other noun—"is a road made by laying," etc. 19. The commas that set off the *who* clause can only mean "and I will remark, by the way, that of course all women do have a lot of bonds and stocks in the bank." A clause which is very restrictive in meaning has been punctuated as if it were non-restrictive. 20. *Was* is used with the plural subject *noises;* the *when suddenly* clause is poor and tiresome. ("Just as I was thinking that the noises at the head of the stairs were rather suspicious, Dave Hursen tripped," etc.)

LESSON 35

If I should ask a conference of a hundred English teachers what part of this Lesson they thought most important, I should not expect more than five per cent of them to name what I find most important in practice. I vote for the paragraphs about *with.* If that choice seems queer to you, observe *with* during the rest of the year. Don't accept my judgment unless your experience confirms it. I may be overwrought by my long enmity against this word.

The word that has the greatest prestige of bad eminence is *only,* but for my part I am almost willing to omit the discussion of it. It is a fact of literature that *only* has been very commonly used before

the verb, at some distance in front of the emphasized word, as in "I only want a little." One of the most prominent teachers in Massachusetts considers it wrong to teach students that they must say "I want only a little."

We all seem pretty well agreed that dangling verbals are prevalent errors that need attention. I agree. But I must admit (what I didn't know till ten years ago) that unrelated participles are strangely numerous in literature. The modern scientist could not live without his "coming now to the third point, it is seen that." I need not proclaim to my class that all users of dangling participles are ignoramuses; I simply believe that students ought to be taught to know what they are doing with their participles and to avoid dangling if a school forbids it.

Comments on the Exercise

1. *With* is clumsy and meaningless (try *because of*); *these* is used to modify the singular noun *kind*. 2. Whatever our own feelings about *only* may be, we should remember that many teachers who are eminently cultured and sensitive would consider it pure dogmatism and purism to insist that the position of *only* must be shifted in this sentence. There may be a certain primness or hauteur about "only a couple of minutes." Yet we are certainly right in showing students that they ought to know how to put *only* close to what it intensifies. If it comes before *had*, it seems to emphasize that "we only had." The idea is that we had to wait "only a very short time." Since there is no comma before *who*, the sentence means "for that particular Marie who is seldom ready, but probably we had to wait a long time for all the other Maries." A very non-restrictive clause, adding a side-remark about Marie, is made to be restrictive and tell about this girl as distinguished from all the others. 3. A *where* clause is used to name what was in the column of jokes. 4. *Without* and *with* are used in a clumsy combination; *that* has no construction. 5. No error. 6. *Before* comes clumsily at the end of the sentence, far from the *heard* which it modifies. 7. *That* is used twice before the same noun clause, "he would have called"; *was* is used with the plural subject *Smiths*. 8. There is no real error in omitting conjunctions before the two noun clauses, but the result sounds as if the second one were an independent clause. How many in the class can explain that there are two parallel subordinate clauses in the sentence? Perhaps not one can. Two *thats* would be far preferable. How many failed to notice that *good* is used as an adverb? It would be interesting and useful to get a poll of the class on this point before anything has been said about *good;* a very brief written test would secure the information. 9. *Happy* seems to modify *evening*. 10. *Even* comes clumsily at the end of the sentence, far from what it modifies. (*Even* is usually better placed if it is before the stressed word, in this case before *have*, or possibly before *for*. But no ruling on this point can be absolute; *even* may come after the word it intensifies.) 11. Does *they* refer to the people who had been posing or to several people who had been managing the cameras? Unless *they*

are the ones who have been standing, the participle *standing* is misrelated. *Which* is used to refer to *operator*. 12. *To my mind* is misplaced and is used restrictively. (Try "is, to my mind, very distracting." Why wouldn't *to me* be more natural?) 13. *With* is clumsy and meaningless, and is used restrictively; it has no antecedent. 14. *Sniffing* seems to modify *it*. 15. *That* after *raw materials* is a repetition of the conjunction. 16. *With* seems to say that the wheels have been painted "blue with black." 17. No error. A very doubtful and weak nominative absolute, though not exactly an error in syntax. (Try an *as* or a *since* clause, or "because of my mother's failure to understand.") 18. The noun *side-swipe collision* is defined by a *when* clause. (Try "is running alongside a wreck that," etc. The *when* clause is so easy and understandable that it makes us wish the idiom would come into good usage.) 19. *Sweetly* is used as a predicate adjective. 20. *The* is omitted before *West* and before *United States*. (If no *the* is used before *East*, none would be needed before *West;* we must have two articles or no article.)

LESSON 36

The high spots for me in this Lesson are numbers 45, 46, and 47. The non-parallelism caused by these words is an extremely common fault and produces effects that are deplorable. A non-parallel construction in a sentence is not, like the position of *only*, a matter of disputed judgment; it makes all the judicious grieve.

The next most essential part of the Lesson is paragraph 55, our old enemy of failure to subordinate.

The Lesson has in it more possibilities of producing noticeable results in themes than any of the preceding four Lessons. The reason is plain; it does not deal with the choice and arrangement of single words, but with the adjustment of large elements of the sentence.

If several years of experience had not taught me the strange fact, I never could have believed that the effective way to conduct a recitation on this Exercise is to describe what construction is falsely made parallel with what construction. The student who has to make that analysis of what is wrong learns about parallelism; the student who merely recasts may learn very little.

Comments on the Exercise

1. "Many beautiful chairs" is made parallel with "we found also." 2. "That a blue light had been seen" is made parallel with the two *of* phrases. 3. *Which* is made parallel with *that*. 4. "To spend his time" is made parallel with "could he afford." (Strict parallelism would require "could afford neither to pay nor to spend"; and that is the safe model for teaching the principle. As a matter of fact there is some good warrant in usage for the form that sounds less labored—

"could neither afford to pay nor to spend.") 5. No error, though a safer model of arrangement would be "everything was now spotless and newly painted in the kitchen, where." 6. The following four constructions are made parallel: the passive participle *printed;* the nominative absolute noun *letters,* unmodified; the absolute phrase *design standing out;* the absolute construction "many of the lines zigzag." 7. *In* is used after *delight* and must therefore be understood after *fondness,* but there is no such idiom as "fondness in." (Try "He seems to have a fondness for these silly puns and a perfect delight in them.") 8. *It is* has been made parallel with *which can be used;* a relative clause and an independent *it* clause are used as if they were similar. 9. The two negative statements are parallel in form, but they are joined by an *also* which indicates two positive statements. It may be that literature furnishes examples of *also* linking negative assertions, but did "also not" ever sound proper in a school theme? 10. *Not expect* is made parallel with *you must have.* 11. The independent clause *they look* is made parallel with a *because* clause. Or can some student explain that *because* is easily understood with the second clause? If so, he is probably right. 12. The independent clause *it is* has been made parallel with the adjective *correct.* 13. *To see* has been made parallel with *by ringing.* 14. *Only* emphasizes *had been set* instead of *five; also* links a negative statement; *was* is used with the plural subject *forks.* 15. Probably the two modifiers (*light weight, fine in quality*) are sufficiently parallel; the trouble is that they are used after a dash, in an appositive way, to show a reason. 16. *If* is made parallel with *whether.* (The shift of conjunction perhaps corresponds to a shift in the speaker's way of thinking about the weather, and is certainly a slight error.) 17. The omission of *that* before the second noun clause makes it seem as if the second clause were not parallel, but were independent; the two *hims,* referring to Curtis and Ned, are confusing.

LESSON 37

The usual treatment of coördinate clauses in textbooks would make us suppose that we could tell when clauses are equal in importance. The implication always has been that a rhetorician can estimate the relative value of two ideas by a sort of critical scales and tell which is heavier. But I have never been able to find any such measure of ideas and consider it a myth. Open any well-written book at random, as I am now going to open *Kim,* and see what you find. Here are pages 254 and 255. I see these three puzzles, put into the mouth of Lurgan Sahib, who is made to speak in a highly dignified style:

> His honor is great only in Simla, *and* it is noticeable that he has no name.
>
> From time to time, God causes men to be born—*and* thou art one of them—who have a lust to go abroad.
>
> Among these ten I count the Babu, *and* that is curious.

When we know that Kipling wrote these sentences and when we feel their exquisite diction and rhythm, we are straightway satisfied with

the *ands,* and we can concoct an explanation of them as "proper." But if the authorship were unknown and if the sentences were robbed of their beauty of words (while the relative "weight" of the ideas remained the same) and if these altered sentences were mingled with seven others in a list for an intelligence test given to professors of English, it would be a safe bet that the Kipling "balance" would be severely condemned. In each case the two constructions connected by *and* are dissimilar; there is decided non-parallelism. What do you think of them when the diction is altered?

> His business is only successful in Waterbury, *and* it is a fact that he has no reputation.
>
> Mrs. Brown orders jobs to be done—*and* this is one of them—that have a mighty suspicious look to me.
>
> I guess that Patrick is one of these three men, *and* that is queer.

After some years of pondering the question of "relative importance of ideas" I conclude that the task is altogether too delicate for my clumsy mind. If you can feel the subtle differences, you will go another way to work. If you are like me, you will be wary of criticizing *and* sentences because they do not conform to literary standards. You will find yourself in the position that is now familiar to any user of *Theme-Building:* The fact that professionals venture to hitch unlike clauses together with *and* is no proof that such hitching is good practice for you in school. Learn the normal way of making your clauses "combine to produce one effect." When you are master of this apprentice requirement, you may play with unbalanced forms.

It is true that George Eliot, with her sure instinct for logic, usually did balance her clauses rather carefully; it is true that most authors have in most cases balanced their clauses, and that schools ought to require balance. But it does not seem true that literature has set any such standard of "equal weight" as the rhetorics have taught. If a teacher is not clear in his own mind as to the usage of *and,* he will convey error to a class.

There is no way of applying an exact standard to the sentences in the Exercise. We must not be intent on standardizing. Our minds should be in an easy and tolerant mood, ready to accept any sensible answer. What we want to teach is this: Think when you make an *and* sentence and notice whether it sounds right to you; if you are not heedless, you will hardly make blunders.

Comments on the Exercise

1. Not really bad, because a writer may have designed to make two statements rather than the one statement that "the boy had set and watched." 2. Same reasoning as for No. 1; and the time in the two clauses is different. 3. Poor because we shift from what he did to what was done by us. 4. Poor because all that follows *dreamed* is a pair of items telling what he dreamed; one of them ought not to be

made independent. 5. Poor because the fact that the place was a café and the description of how it was conducted are not similar and not of equal importance. 6. Not bad, for the writer may have wished to make one statement about the smallness and dapperness, another about the contrast with Gilmour. 7. Might be a good sentence in the right context; the two actions of the two people may "combine to produce one effect." 8. Poor because the starting to read and the important contents are not equal in kind. 9. Hard to imagine how this could be a good sentence; the fact that the news came does not deserve to rank with the fact that it killed her. 10. The fact of what its name is and the description of it are not similar in kind or importance. 11. Very likely a good sentence, telling the action of one character in each clause. 12. Easy to make fun of, but balances pretty well; the lateness of the hour is important and may well deserve to be parallel with what the captain did because of the lateness. 13. Perfectly proper balance of what you have been doing and what I want you to do now. 14. A good balance of how skilful I was and how badly he was worsted. 15. Poor because the mere fact that I have been studying is not similar in kind or importance to what I have learned. The real fault is in the shift of subject, from *I have* to *there are*. 16. There may be some condition in which these two statements would be understood as a pair contributing to one effect; but how can they be fitted together? The sentence seems very poor. 17. Quite a normal type of sentence in literature: the change of weather, the resulting change in my position. 18. No objection would have to be made to this if it was in a setting of good complex sentences: the fact that she is fat, the fact that my chum jokes about her fatness.

Perhaps at this point you will think that I am too lenient, that hardly any *and* sentence can be objected to on principle if 18 is tolerated. The fact is that most of our strictness of logic about *and* sentences is not borne out by authors. We shall set up a false standard if we insist too much on any such logic. Indeed I have probably gone too far in attempting to show reasons against some of the sentences in the Exercise. The way of facts, and of safety for us, is to admit the truth about many literary examples and to insist on the greater truth that these are not designed as models and that they are not common. 19. Sentence 19 cannot be pronounced wrong by any absolute standard, for he will have such a position and will tell such thoughts. 20. Not necessarily bad, for it balances with what I did and how they responded. Yet sentences 18-20 are just the kind that infest and paralyze school composition *because of their frequency.*

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 272

For examples of newspaper accounts that furnish material for stories see the comments on the Addition to Lesson 19.

LESSON 38

The use of a short, emphatic sentence, or of a series of such sentences, between long sentences is almost sure to have a good effect, and

it does not require artistry. If you see an example in a theme and commend it, you may find that you have cultivated a crop of variety.

The three devices on page 275 require more knack than those given in the earlier lessons, but any intelligent student could easily learn to adorn his composition with an occasional use of them. The periodic sentence is often artificial; it is almost sure to be so if an ambitious student resolves to make it as a display. It is to be encouraged only when it occurs naturally to a writer, and only once in a while.

Comments on the Exercise

Boys who do the Exercise with good spirit may not incorporate one sample of their training in their next theme. An exercise and a theme are in different regions of the brain. A teacher must always be dredging out the canal that connects the two sorts of work if the Exercise is to produce any effect in composition.

Exercise I, first paragraph. 1. Short simple. 2. Long complex beginning with an adverb clause, which is followed by four items that are really equal to little independent clauses in which verbs are understood, and which closes with a relative clause. 3. Very short simple. 4. Compound with *but*. 5. Short simple, containing three prepositional phrases. 6. Complex beginning with an adjective; the subordinate clause has a compound verb of three parts.

Exercise I, second paragraph. This passage was chosen, not for its artistry, but because it is a sample of modern journalistic style. It contains a larger proportion of short sentences beginning with the main subject and verb than most students should venture to have in their themes. 1. Short simple, beginning with a conjunction that is followed by an adjective. How often does a teacher hear or see in themes a sentence that shows such a beginning? 2. A two-word question. How many in the class ever used one? 3. A three-word statement. Making two sentences out of five words is certainly producing varied forms—even if we don't like them. 4. Simple and not long, yet a type almost never paralleled in themes; the dash is followed by a repeated preposition with a different object. 5. A six-word simple sentence. Isn't this overdoing the shortness? 6. Complex, not long, and beginning with the main subject and verb, yet *as a people* used parenthetically is almost enough to prove that no amateur wrote the sentence. 7. Complex beginning with *and*, which is followed by a preposition; the noun clause which is the subject of the verb comes after the verb. One sentence on that model would lend a kind of glory to many themes. 8. Short and simple, with a compound subject. 9. Very short and simple—but look at the two words which begin it. 10. Long simple sentence beginning with a prepositional phrase and containing a compound verb of three parts. 11. Another six-word simple. 12. Short simple, but it closes with an infinitive of purpose. 13. Long compound with *and*. 14. Complex, the noun clause used as subject comes after the verb. 15. Another six-word simple. 16. Long complex, with three phrases in the main clause and two balanced *because* clauses.

A BEDOUIN LUNCHEON, PAGE 278

If students were left to themselves, a majority would read about some race and then try to tell all about it in 300 words. So slowly do they learn to limit subjects. A school theme cannot be written about a whole people. We must seek for some phrase like "women's rights among the Berbers" or "a corroboree" or "how does an Eskimo get vitamins"? The class would drowse if page 279 contained a quotation about Bedouins from an encyclopedia; they will always remember the long loaves of bread. The same kind of difference exists between a digest of a great lot of facts and a theme that limits itself to making a picture of one phrase.

LESSON 39

Do you agree with me that "one complete thought" is the purest metaphysics? If you do not, read the indictment against grammatical definitions made by Otto Jespersen in the *English Journal* for March, 1924. I cannot understand how the "one complete thought" definition has been able to flourish so long in textbooks. Take the dictum that "each sentence must say a single thing" and apply it to any page of literature; a compound sentence says at least two things and could properly be made into two sentences if a different emphasis were needed. Take the dictum that "a sentence is a unit when it conveys a single thought" and place it alongside a complex sentence that indubitably contains five single thoughts. Any dictum about unity of sentences is mythology. All we can say, if we want to remain truthful, is that we must grow familiar with the limits that usage has put on the length and contents of acceptable sentences. Lesson 39 is an exhibit of sentences that custom calls unified and of sentences that custom calls lacking in unity. There is no objective measure of unity that has any meaning if we try to apply it strictly to literature. All is a question of custom, of usage.

The longer we teach, the more we come to rely on the simple, unscientific advice about *and,* and *but* on page 287.

Comments on the Exercise

Possibilities for the Exercise: 1. Those few who are not prevented by the danger and expense of taking this chance are very fortunate. 2. In spite of our fear of the lynx, the roaring fire that we built could not prevent our falling asleep again—even while the scream was echoing among the rocks—and sleeping soundly for an hour. 3. Why shouldn't we try a broom for this very light snow? 4. I shook down a ripe fig into my hat, cut the little sprouts from each end, and then, holding it between my finger and thumb at these two points, pared off the prickly rind with my knife and gave a piece of the fruit to the boys—who approved it most highly. 5. When at last, after a full month of labor, the bungalow was completed, even to the furniture (made in the neighborhood from raw material), the night of the housewarming was a celebration not soon to be forgotten. 6. When, after

his very studious youth, he became a tutor to the younger boys, his teachings were of a sort that brought him into disfavor with the people of Athens. 7. Though I tried to ride fast on my bicycle, the air was so exceedingly hot that I seemed to be just moving. 8. I hurriedly obeyed the angry yell of the policeman to "get off that sidewalk mighty quick." 9. Although Colorado has delightful summers, its winters are so severe for Easterners who are not acclimated that it cannot rival California. 10. The long hours at the market—from four or five in the morning till five in the afternoon—will not prevent me from liking my work very well, because the men are so sociable and gentlemanly.

LESSON 40

I fear that I seem like an iconoclast, determined to smash current opinions about rhetoric, when I say that I can see no reality in customary definitions of "unity" of sentences and paragraphs. Yet I have no wish to overthrow standard opinions. I don't like revolution and destruction, and I invite no teacher to try to use my skepticism if it disturbs him. But I must call attention to a doubt that has been useful to me. I have found that I struggle with dry nothings if I approach sentences and paragraphs with an abstract definition of "unity." If I honestly apply the definition to the paragraphs of literature, most of them are proved to be unfit; they simply will not measure up to textbook assumptions. The makers of literature have never written by any such definitions. The only people who feel secure about the definitions are those who never test them. Suppose that you put the Gulliver paragraph (page 289) into modern vernacular, substituting modern names and ideas, slipped it into a poorly written theme, and asked a committee of teachers to criticize the paragraphs. This paragraph of Swift's would be treated with contempt, as something unworthy of even good high-school composition.

If you think that an extreme statement, you must be unfamiliar with the many similar experiments that have been made in teachers' colleges. It has been proved again and again that idioms used by the masters are judged intolerable if they appear in a mimeographed list of blunders; that approved stanzas of poetry are judged inferior to prettified versions of them. Our nice little standards of excellence do not work when applied to unknown material. Our measure of "paragraph unity by a topic sentence" will not work when applied to the paragraphs in the classics.

All I can observe about the unity of literary paragraphs is that each is a step forward in the progress; each can be seen, in its setting, to be one step. But it very often has no topic sentence and, if detached from context, may not be "unified" according to our school recipes. That truth need not dishearten us by making our work seem hopelessly vague; it merely keeps us free from the assumptions that our teaching devices originate in literary models. A topic sentence is not a prevalent truth in literature; it is principally a tool of non-literary exposition and of teaching non-literary students how to stick to a topic.

Criticisms of the Paragraphs in the Exercise

1. Well unified on the topic of "Hadley's melancholy caused by disappointment in love." The first sentence speaks of "loss of enthusiasm," the second of his "melancholy," and the others explain the cause of the melancholy. Perhaps the second sentence, about "seeking the reason," could be called a topic sentence, but there is no evidence that the writer used it as such; it is not an announcement.

2. It need not be true that "the first sentence announces the topic of Cedric's character, but the other sentences forget the character and run into a description of a scene," though that statement happens to be nearly the truth. So far as we can guess, the author did suppose that her first sentence was announcing a topic; but we have no right to assume that until we have read the whole. No form of criticism is so easy or so likely to go wrong as this formula of "what the first sentence announces," for it would discredit half the paragraphs of English classics. Most students dote on the formula and should be constantly required to beware of it. But in this case the fact is that the second sentence carries on the idea of "character" and clearly indicates that the following description is for the purpose of "bringing out Cedric's character"; also the last sentence returns, strongly and well, to the character-sketch; and the seven sentences between help toward an understanding of what manner of man he was. The paragraph is hardly lacking in unity. The weakness is that the one topic is really forgotten through the four sentences that begin "Outside," for these describe a situation and make poor emphasis and proportion. The first sentence may have been designed to announce the topic, but it did not prevent the wandering into description.

3. The first three sentences tell of the uniform and arms of an officer, and the fourth and fifth sentences (it might be argued) carry on this topic by explaining why officers have nothing but side-arms to carry. But "equipment" has become dominant over "uniform"; then comes the duty of lieutenants to be near their men; then comes "training." The paragraph is about as bad as could be made. There is no sign that the writer had ever heard of a topic sentence—much less of one topic for one paragraph.

4. The first three sentences are all about the survivor, Schulz; the last three tell us that no one else survived. Almost these identical sentences could easily be made into a unified paragraph about "all but one of the traitors died"; yet, as the paragraph now stands, we cannot determine whether the topic is "the survivor" or "all the rest perished." There is no evidence that any sentence was supposed to announce the topic, but the unified paragraph could well lead up to, and be summarized by, "Fate had laid her hand."

5. Apparently the first sentence was expected to suggest the topic of "more light," and this is adhered to through four sentences. Then in the last three we have the window-opener and the general comfort. The paragraph might, possibly, have been made unified by linking the items in such a way that they would lead up to the last sentence as a topic-announcer.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 293

"A beautiful scene has no power of its own to pass from our brain to other people's brains." The most convincing demonstration of this that I ever had was a theme about a burning steamer in the South Pacific. It was so lifeless that the class thought it a very poor effort at romance, and I had no doubt that it was pure lazy fancy. Yet the writer had actually been on the vessel that rescued the passengers of the burning steamer. His theme was read in the same recitation with a description of catching a mouse. The mouse theme was easily the most entertaining description of the day, and the steamer theme the dreariest. The contrast has been of constant value to me when described to succeeding classes.

I have wondered why we are so unable in oral composition to tap that abundant source of energy, the desire to talk. In private conversation we all want the floor; we are uneasy if someone else talks for long; we admire the restraint of anyone who is a good listener. If formality can be put aside in a class, we should be able to achieve much with "what you like to talk about."

LESSON 41

Of course "one purpose" is simply unity. It refers to an attitude of mind, to asking, "What am I trying to do here?" It is a living motive rather than an abstract sense of oneness, and is a more potent way of thinking than an effort to conceive unity. Of course, also, paragraph 3 about "needless information" could properly be classed as a matter of proportion. Unity and proportion are overlapping and intertwined virtues. Paragraph 4 is really a drive at being concrete, specific, naming some facts; but this accusation of "omitting the important thoughts" will do more to cause smiles and make the point visible than a discourse on "specific detail."

Comments on the Paragraphs in the Exercise

A. Every part of every sentence in the first paragraph is true to the one purpose of describing the new thirteen-month calendar. In the second paragraph we feel one purpose, "how hard it will be to get the country used to it"; but the illustration from English history is not well linked to Americans nowadays. The third paragraph has two purposes: (a) to show that modern Americans will not be so slow to adopt a new calendar, (b) to argue for the advantages of the calendar.

B. No one purpose can be seen, for we are led from "how hard it was for me to work" to "still I have, like the rest of humanity, learned to work" to "why they wanted me to work."

C. The first paragraph has one purpose, to announce that I am going to argue for compulsory training. The second paragraph turns from

"advantages of voluntary training" to "disadvantages"; since this turn is made in the middle of a sentence ("but, on the contrary"), the author appears not to know what his purpose is. Perhaps the purpose of the third paragraph is to contrast the disadvantages of compulsory training (first five sentences) with the advantages (last three sentences), but it takes close, careful study to find this purpose—and then we are not sure of it. The fourth paragraph has a definite purpose of summarizing the advantages of compulsory training, and this is clear throughout, except in the second sentence, where we read that "a boy would work harder" and are puzzled for a moment.

LESSON 42

These ten paragraphs continue the five paragraphs of Lesson 16, the comments on which fit here. The Lesson will be more valuable to any student who will try to "give something of the life of the author's style, as if you cared for his skill."

Possible Descriptions of the Transitions: 6. The impression of "wailing with full lungs" at the end of paragraph 5 is carried on by "things were getting simply infernal" at the opening of 6, before we "strike out blindly" for a "complete change of environment." The larger part of paragraph 6, as explained in the brackets, is taken up with thinking over "the grand kinds of life" that he might lead; hence this main impression is well carried on by "of all professions" at the opening of 7. The fancy of being a general, a fabled hero, who gives the older people a good talking to, is carried on with "this pleasant conceit"; we are led along to the new fancy by "some twenty minutes" and "then the old sense of injury called for new plasters." After "happy thoughts of the sea," of being commander of a pirate craft, in 8, we are led along to a description of the convent by "when I brought myself back from the future to the actual present." Then I see the building of gray stone. The author carefully shows by several past-perfect tenses that he is now taking the reader back to a time of a previous visit to the place. From this description of the past we are brought to the present by "for paying friendly calls" at the end of the first sentence of 10, and by "harmonized with my humor" in the second sentence. This care of the author when he changes the time is worthy of comment. "Thereupon," in the third sentence, a new fancy swims up—that of being a monastic brother. The fancy is abruptly broken by the one word "whack" at the end of 10. "A well-aimed clod" at the opening of 11 is a natural sequel and explanation of "whack." The paragraph tells of preparation for answering the attack. "As I expected" continues the description of the strategy and leads to the moment when "I issued from shelter" and began my counter-attack. After the tussle and the bawling retreat of the vanquished boy in 12 we are carried on to what I did by "but as for me" in 13, which tells of my elation in victory. As long as a person is indulging in morose or exciting fancies, he is not hungry; so the close of

13—"feeling villainously hungry"—shows that the fight has brought the boy back to real life. Where should a small boy's thoughts turn, where should he go, if he is hungry? Why should an author, who has perhaps been over-careful about linking paragraphs, be obliged to say in set terms, "I decided to start for home to get some lunch"? It is a good point to furnish a reader variety by not making a studied transition to 14, but to start home without naming home. When I arrive, I learn from Harold that Edward has not been ungrateful and that all the gloom has vanished from the children's lives. Now comes an entirely abrupt beginning of 15. Why is there no transition? Perhaps most of the class—at least the boys—are near enough to The Golden Age not to realize that all the mass of childish fancies and adventures amount to nothing in comparison with the tragic reality of Martha's grief. It is that reality that must stand out at the end of the story. It stands out more effectively because of the abrupt naming of Martha at the beginning of 15. The author probably designed this sudden, unannounced shift in order to make the tragedy more emphatic. He makes a reader feel like this: "Oh, yes—Martha! I am like the children; I had almost forgotten her. Yes, poor Martha."

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 304

Many teachers achieve great improvement in structure by showing students how to set up the plan as a framework, to announce the plan in the first paragraph, to announce each step of the plan as the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph, and to summarize the plan in a concluding paragraph. This way of working compels a student to keep from straying. If you come upon that sort of theme amidst a set of sprawling, formless ones, you find it admirable in contrast. There is much to be said for teaching that trains a student to display the skeleton of structure, especially if he is backward or untrained.

Otherwise there is no merit in this ugly kind of craft. It is an advertisement that the writer has small skill. A theme built in such a way is gaunt and forbidding. Remind students that in living bodies the bones are always out of sight and that the same is true of live themes.

THE CHRIST OF THE ANDES, PAGE 306

If Chile and Argentina should be at war when the class sees this picture, the pessimists would have a good chance to make sport of the monument so ecstatically inscribed. There is the same kind of reason for ridiculing a League of Nations or a World Court or any effort to rid the world of war. A solemn oath is not a remedy for war; not even the Christian religion has been a remedy. Human wisdom has been quite baffled in its effort to find the way to peace.

So be sure that the message is not misinterpreted. The Christ of the Andes is not a guarantee of peace. It is an effort. Every effort may teach us something about the solution of the world's most frightful problem.

LESSON 43

There is a very general supposition that criticism is not "constructive" work. A text-maker learns that his book looks forceful and "constructive" if he assigns a great deal of composition; a critic somehow gathers the impression that the mere directions to achieve beauty result in an achievement of them. He is deceived by a mere display of exhortation.

We who work in classrooms know that improvement can come only by attention to the details of how school writers go to work. Writers and carpenters have to learn their trades by practice and not by criticizing—that is true enough. But no carpenter can learn his trade by trying to build a lot of experimental houses; he must learn, by familiarity with thousands of details, how previous houses have been put together. His whole trade is learned—every trade is learned—by watching the processes of building. That is criticism in the sense meant on page 308.

The two stories in the Exercise are far below the standard of ordinary school excellence, and so might seem too poor to be good material. But I have found that if students can readily see the faults in a printed theme, they are stimulated and pleased—that is, they are taught.

"Restored Friendship" seems to contain parts of two plots. The first centers in a quarrel between Captain Smith and his brother, who are not on speaking terms in the third paragraph, but who have a talk in the fourth, which results in a reconciliation that is announced in the last words of the story. The other partial plot is the care of the light by the faithful Brown. We are kept in suspense; we simply find that Brown was equal to the emergency; and there we are. Why did the Captain's "rate of travel become slower and slower"? Why did he start to walk? The story gives us no real pictures, no understanding.

"Taking a Chance" may have one merit: the policeman's appetite for lunch saves the boy from arrest. Otherwise there is no merit. The long description in the first paragraph of the difficulties of securing a license is not made to count in the plot. At first he does not worry over the town policeman, but it is a town policeman who pursues him. The giving up of the chase by the policeman is not realistic. The last paragraph weaves back and forth with *but* and *though*.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 317

Paragraph 2 is really one of many invitations to narrow the topic. Ask students if they have ever enjoyed a theme that spread out broadly. Isn't it almost certain that an interesting theme is about a limited

subject? Any blossom, if observed intently, is a collection of more wonders than can be told about in a long theme. Any big snowflake presents an expanse of complicated beauties. When attention is limited to any small object, wonder and interest appear. For example, a box of chalk is a dead subject; the making of one crayon is rather interesting; the composition of a small fleck of a crayon startles the imagination; the life history of one of the microscopic animals whose skeletons are in the flake is a romance; a molecule in the skeleton is a marvel past all comprehension; and if you go on in smallness, through the atoms to the electrons that whirl thousands of miles a second, you have beggared the adjectives that tell of wonderment. (See Volume I of the *Outline of Science.*)

The principle applies to all theme topics: Alexander the Great is worthless as a subject compared with the character of our puppy; the destruction of Pompeii is flat compared with the moment when father came round the corner.

Paragraph 4 has a big message for students. Why have so many public speakers never learned it?

LESSON 44

When we think of what good exposition means for democracy, for social welfare in the coming years, we cannot find words to express our emotions. If we could declare the truth, it would sound overwrought. One phase of the necessity for exposition—that of popular explanation of science—was voiced in the *Century* for March, 1922, in an article by A. E. Wiggam, called "The New Decalogue of Science," which has since been expanded into a book with the same title. His thesis was that the modern world of thought is being revolutionized by science, that the layman's misunderstanding of science is undermining religion, and that intelligent people are crying out for exposition that they can understand, but that hardly any scientist is able to make an exposition of modern developments. Wiggam speaks fervidly of this inability of the priests of science to declare their message to the people, and of the need for spokesmen to intervene, to learn the gist of what science knows, and to translate it by good exposition into terms that we can all understand.

Such a consideration is remote from our direct class needs; we cannot stir students to composition by rehearsing it. My reason for writing the previous paragraph is to show, by one illustration, how vital a matter is the power of exposition for our social and moral and esthetic life. We teach better if we are conscious, however vaguely, that we are touching the hem of the garment of great issues. The nature of exposition is very dimly apprehended in our age. Science does not know that it has anything to do with the formula of page 319: "You, a human being, are trying to be clear and interesting to some other human being." The medical profession is only beginning to tell itself that all patients are human, that their greatest need is often for human treatment, and that because medicine has become impersonal it is driving people to quackery and faith-healing. Why do people go to

war? After ten years of wondering and reading I have not found any exposition that answers the question. When the exposition is made, it will be clear and simple and human—and it will point the way out of war.

"These are but wild and whirling words, my lord," said Horatio when Hamlet said that every man had business and that he, for his part, would go pray. We all have definite, everyday business in classrooms; and we expect a teachers' manual to talk business and give practical counsel about Lesson 44. For once, good friends, by your leave, let's elevate our thoughts about exposition. Our teaching life is not all a matter of methods and devices.

"Tricks Worth Knowing" in the Four Passages

In No. 1: Beginning with "has no teeth," because this is what people are likely to misunderstand and what they need to know first. The picture-making phrases like "broad, thin plates," "split into thousands of hairs," "entangled among the hairy ends," "what his net has caught." First describing how the whale catches his meal, so that the picture is before us; then explaining "the necessity of this arrangement" in the next paragraph. Making clear that the rush of water, "flowing out as fast as it flows in," would take away the food if there were no whalebone.

In No. 2: First asking the question, which we have never thought of, so that we are curious about the answer. Using phrases like "that low twig," "glittering in the light of our lamp," "that drooping leaf," to make the whole explanation seem a narrative of what is happening right before our eyes. Telling in the first paragraph of "something important to happen," to rouse our curiosity for the second paragraph. Giving a vivid picture of the spider's operations by comparing her to "a fisherman winding up his line" and to a tight-rope walker. Choosing a limited topic—carrying a thread from one support to another—instead of trying to tell all about web-making in such a brief space. Closing with "strong enough to bear her weight," which is a fitting end for this limited topic.

In No. 3: Taking pains to make a reader realize what a meteoroid is—very small, moving freely for ages, "tearing away twenty miles a second." Making clear the "terrific resistance" of the air to any body moving so fast, speaking of "10,000 degrees of heat," "boil away any object which ever existed." Closing by bringing us just to the last step—"see as a shooting-star"—and stopping there.

In No. 4: Beginning by warning us that a real mystery is before us —"enigma of selling what one does not possess." Using a "preparatory lesson" of buying a carload of coal, which is homely and easy to understand. Carefully taking only one step of difficulty at a time—buying shares of Pennsylvania stock *to be delivered next day;* then taking the next step, the borrowing of the shares. (The subject is a curiously hard one, and students who do not understand it after reading

this passage must not infer that the explanation is at fault. They can at least catch the general idea—which is more than many brokers know. One experienced dealer in stocks has testified that only a small percentage of men who daily "sell short" could give any rational explanation of the real nature of their operations; they have simply learned to go through the motions. We teachers are under no obligation to expound "selling short." We are showing the admirable way in which Van Antwerp went about the almost impossible task. *His way of going to work* is clear enough.)

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 326

The outburst of feeling in the sermon about Lesson 44 sufficiently explains what was in my mind when I put these Suggestions together.

Surely there has recently been in your community some example of two speakers who furnished the kind of contrast that is shown between the efforts to explain Federal Courts. Use it and point the moral again. It is the law of exposition which Van Antwerp knew when he began (page 324) with buying a carload of coal.

"Make yourself an expert" is a good slogan for stimulating the right kind of preparation. Refer to the professor of radio on page 172.

LESSON 45

It will not be hard to see between the lines that I have small faith in the huge formalities of a brief. Imagine Burke making such a big outline for a two-hour speech. Even his longest efforts could be skeletonized in a few headings; a "brief" of the speech would be what he never thought of and never could have carried in his mind. Have the advocates of brief ever considered that Burke and Webster made *oral* compositions?

I once asked a keen and successful captain of a university debating team what use his teams made of briefs. "Oh," he answered, "we build a big brief to chart all the possible arguments on each side, and we keep it posted in our club room. But a brief doesn't signify in writing any one fifteen-minute speech." There you are. A fifteen-minute university speech contains about two thousand words. What about a brief for a thousand-word school composition?

The five bits of advice on page 330 are an epitome of such wisdom as I have been able to pick up in observing and coaching and judging school and college debates during the past fifteen years. If I had dared, I should have put in a sixth that seems to me more important than all the rest as a practical guide: concentrate on one reason. The speech that thrills a judge is one which leads up by definite steps to one reason and one conclusion. But this fact, so obvious to me and so often exemplified, is not generally believed, and I do not wish to inject a disputed idea into a brief lesson.

LESSON 46

Both of the examples of argument given in the lesson are likely to stir resentment in many students. That is the reason for putting them in. A concrete illustration of how resentment can be utilized is this experience when I was preparing the book: A keen teacher in school and college classes read the proofs; in Lesson 45 he found an outline of "It is right to deport aliens"; he rebuked me sharply for presenting the affirmative of such horrible doctrine; and he proceeded to give me an excellent oral theme on the negative. He had been stirred to make good composition.

Yet you will see that the outline was deleted from Lesson 45. I sadly admitted that if a mere outline in a book stirred his passions so, it would probably put many teachers into an unhappy frame of mind. Such contentious creatures are we all that the mere sight of a lesson in composition rouses us to war—not about composition at all, but about the merits of the case. Perhaps some teachers have burned *Theme-Building* in the public square because it offers, as examples of composition, an argument that Peary cheated and an argument that protectionism is wrong. So difficult is it even for mature minds to distinguish between rhetorical and moral issues.

Be cautious, therefore, about stirring up too violent a diatribe against capitalism by use of "Help yourself," or too much wrath at home by your admiration of "Protectionism." Remember that most people cannot distinguish between rhetorical skill and wrong opinion about political economy. You and *Theme-Building* are not teaching economics, but the gentle art of arguing. But don't be too cautious. Fan the flames as high as safety permits. Flames produce good composition.

"What were you required to do?" asks the Exercise. Most of us know something of the importance of that question in every department of our school, but none of us can impress it sufficiently upon students. Readers for examination boards find that a large proportion of candidates have never been trained to notice what the question is; though much is at stake and though the candidate knows the right way to answer, he may heedlessly take the wrong way, and so lose all credit. Most of us teachers of English—if I may judge from my own work—put too little stress on "What were you told to do?" We are prone to accept a theme as a theme, without reference to what sort of treatment it was supposed to be.

This girl was required to show, by a line of reasoning, that the moving-picture theater is a benefit to her town. The first paragraph tells why the movies are superior to the legitimate stage, without the least effort to attach her remarks to the topic. Her second paragraph dilates on the merits of the *Weymouth* and has only one point of contact with the topic—"children are safe and happy there." The "amusing" of the children in the third paragraph and the "given to some charitable organization" may be benefits to the town, but they are slight and questionable. The claim in the last paragraph, that movies will obviate the need of reading newspapers, is so highly exaggerated as to make the whole theme sound insincere. What is more, would it be

a benefit to train people not to read the papers? As for structure of the theme, the four paragraphs are four blocks of material, distinct from each other, showing no organization into one progressive argument. The last words are the least convincing and the farthest away from the topic.

Can students justify the statement that this writer "has by no means failed completely?" They could have done so if the theme had been put before them at the beginning of the year and they had been asked, "Is this fairly good?" Few of them would then have made an analysis of its utter weakness. The fact is a valuable one to stress, for it proves that great progress has been made; and such proof incites to more progress. What would the class have liked about this so-called argument? Isn't it true that the girl has made the *Weymouth* seem an attractive place with a good influence? If so, it is a benefit to the town.

THEME SUGGESTIONS, PAGE 338

Try to imagine a man of any importance in a community who did not covet the power of standing on his feet before an audience and speaking persuasively for the side of a question that he believed in. There are such men, no doubt; but have you ever seen one? Can anyone in the class find such a man or woman during the next seven days? Don't prophesy that a search for one will fail, but open the matter as a request; you can then retire if any peculiar local condition might make an adverse showing for the cause of oral argument. But almost surely, if students put the question clearly, every older citizen that they respect will heartily admit that he wishes he could argue in public. Any citizen who denies this must be exceptional, since one of the commonest human traits is to feel flattered if we have an opportunity to address an audience; we should all like to be able to shine in such an undertaking.

The desire for the power to write is more remote and dim. It is the power to speak that is most in our thoughts. Can't some student inveigle an admired citizen into telling the class how valuable is the training in arguing orally? That way of selecting a speaker is perilous, for it might result in a flamboyant or insincere address to the class; people are apt to be hypocrites when exhorting boys and girls. It would be safer if you hunt for a person who will talk simply, giving "straight goods," and who can be trusted to finish in ten minutes.

Do you believe that the coveted oral ability is best developed by writing? Students should be cautioned about a great and striking exception. Many men, even unlettered ones, are brilliant speakers; they never have written anything. The fourth paragraph on page 338 is not speaking of persons who have some inborn fire of oratory or who have had the patience and time to practice speaking for years. The paragraph speaks only of the average student, not gifted, who does not drive himself much outside of school practice. Such a person, who relies on school training, is likely to reach better results in structure by way of writing.

LESSON 47

I need not announce that these nine pages of text are not an ordinary lesson, to be assigned in a block. The text will be used with better effect if taken piecemeal, in connection with other lessons or theme assignments.

Lesson 47 is a summary of the whole teaching of the book about the four (or five) types of discourse. We are not concerned with types, but with purposes—an entirely different matter.

Probably you have thought me a good deal of a crank about planning for "those very last words"—compare "the last three words" near the bottom of page 342. It is quite possible that I have come to over-emphasize that advice. But it works. It has grown up very gradually in my mind, from a beginning when I had no faith whatever in it. I watched it grow and was as surprised and distrustful as if I had been watching an experiment in somebody else's laboratory. All the while I could see it producing results. And I have a fondness for results.

There is no new principle in this Lesson. It gathers together and amplifies the scattered teachings of previous lessons about being sure of our one purpose in every composition. Much failure in examinations in all schools is due simply to the fact that students have not been trained to ask as a preliminary, "Let's see; what is the question? What must be my one purpose in answering?" (See page 345.) Some leaders of thought who want to explain have not learned to ask before they begin, "What do people not know?" (See the bottom of page 345.) "Meet them on their own ground" (page 348) has not been understood by many far-seeing publicists who wish to steer people straight.

Comments on the Exercise

The purpose of "The Dreary Classics" ought to be to show some serious and sensible reason why the study of a certain few classics does not help to educate students. The greatest and most obvious reason would be that the study does not cause students to like literature. But even this might not be final proof; for the fault may be in the way the classics are studied, or another benefit (like added knowledge of literature) may be a necessary part of education.

The writer is careful to limit his theme to a few classics, and he objects to these in a persuasive way—not going to extremes, conceding that the classics have merit, but firmly expressing his convictions. He makes a good point (in the last paragraph) by questioning whether teachers themselves really prefer the classics. His descriptions of his feelings about three classics are made in such a tone that we sympathize with them and can believe that so much "compelled" reading may be a mistake.

The great failure in purpose is that there is no appeal to any reason against studying the three classics. That is, he does not set up any standard of judging whether a subject ought to be in the curriculum, but weakly appeals to "would it do any harm to try excluding them?"

The whole argument is against the "fourth or fifth reading" of *Caesar*, the "five or six times" through *The Merchant of Venice*, and the "always choosing" *The Lady of the Lake*. He is objecting to the sameness and narrowness and monotony of the list of classics. He has not argued the question of removing these classics from the curriculum. The tone of much of the theme is flippant and ironical; the writer shows no realization that he is supposed to solve a problem.

A YELLOWSTONE TRAMP, PAGE 352

This picture naturally suggests theme topics of the same storified kind that come out of the first picture of Marcella. If it is used near the end of the year, and much more if it is used near the end of the second year with the book, the topics should have more thought content. The most childlike situation compels thought if we look behind it. How has the stag lived during the winter? How do all wild animals struggle for a living? The human race has always been engaged in the same struggle, and always must be; but Americans have forgotten the fact during two centuries of helping themselves freely from a continent-full of natural resources, where no competing neighbors made life uneasy. Now the ordinary human struggle for existence, as the race has always known it, is beginning to press upon us.

That impressive gloom is a topic for very few students, probably for none. It merely shows how far we could go in other directions if we have a bit of imagination. It shows that a picture is not a corral, but a stretch of scenery.

LESSON 48

These seven pages of text ought to be useful to any student in the upper half of a second-year class. It is not for beginners, not for any student who is unable to write an acceptable theme. It is more advanced, for polishing off those who are fit.

Yet "polishing" may be misleading metaphor, for the subject goes far below the surface and is advice about framing the very timbers of composition structure. I have found this material entirely practical for students who have reached the point where they can assimilate it.

Comments on the Exercise

The Exercise contains one example of each of the four types of composition. I will append my own diagnosis of the proportions.

The first two paragraphs of "Speed" can hardly be called out of proportion, because they give us an understanding of the keenness of the rivalry; even the account of the Sunday-school class is useful in this way. Any criticism against the proportions of paragraphs 3-6 is over-severe; good suspense is created, and the description of the races is not too long. If the writer's purpose was to tell of "the victory of X fraternity," the last two paragraphs are too long, or are needless, because they say little about that topic. If the purpose was to picture

"the follies of racing," the last two paragraphs are too short, since all the rest of the theme glories in our victory. We cannot tell from the proportions of the theme what the purpose is. Hence it would be good criticism to say that the great fault is the failure of the writer to decide what he wished emphasized.

There can hardly be a doubt that the writer of "A Dreary March" intended to emphasize the dreariness of the march, even if his title had not said so; for half of the theme gives that effect strongly, and the theme opens and closes with it. Hence the proportion is wrong at three points: (1) in the second paragraph, which merely gives details of the disposition of forces for the march; (2) in the third paragraph, where the sense of dreariness is badly broken up by the two encounters, with the populations of villages and with bandits; (3) in the last paragraph, where "the country was of a more interesting nature." Call the attention of the class to an instructive fact: an artist could make these proportions seem almost excusable by placing the material in a different order and by using different connectives. If he opened with the second paragraph, throwing in only a hint of the dreariness; if in the third and fourth paragraphs he had used concessive clauses, like "to be sure, there were occasional breaks in the monotony"—then the bad proportion would be almost concealed.

The theme about "Growing of Rubber" is too much a list of statements of fact; but these are all pertinent, are in good order, and are well proportioned down to the last paragraph. This, which amounts to two-fifths of the whole, is devoted to the unimportant detail of the modes of tapping the trees. The theme is an instructive example of failure to outline the subject and to plan for a significant close, instead or running artlessly into a minor topic and stopping there.

The first paragraph of the self-government argument (a third of the whole) amounts to nothing more than "much might be said on both sides, and I am first going to argue the side that I do not believe in." The second and third paragraphs (more than a third of the whole) are taken up with conceding the strength of the arguments of the other side.

LESSON 49

The material of this "Lesson" is an assortment of different kinds of advice that have been needed in my school and that are all well down on the level of actual composition in an ordinary eleventh-year class. They are stowed together here in order to make previous lessons more concise and better adapted for B or C sections of classes. Use the material in small doses as occasion arises.

There is no new philosophy about outlines in pages 368-371, but the line of thought and the illustrations make a different sort of appeal. I would call attention to the last two paragraphs on page 371; they discuss a fact of modern life which is not taken into account by any textbook that I know and which is vital. The precepts that were wise in New England academies when stage-coaches were in vogue may be unwise today.

If you could see the beginnings and endings of a thousand themes written in all parts of the country by high-school students recommended for college entrance, and could see how large a proportion of them are lacking in the most elementary skill, you would teach the Exercise with conviction and joy. I have thought it good policy to confine the Exercise to the teachings of Sections A, C, and D, since the text that deals with outlines is a summary of a comprehensive subject.

Don't suppose that my animus against "introductions" and "conclusions" is a personal frame of mind. S. A. Leonard, the author of *English Composition as a Social Problem,* dreads them as much as I do, though he expresses himself rather mildly in his book. The longer I observe school introductions and conclusions, the more I believe that they are of the devil and are perverters of all good planning of composition.

Comments on the Exercise

I. One set of titles might be: 1. The "Turn Over" Religion, 2. The Heart of a Broncho, 3. If I Were Lecturing to Students, 4. Why Hawthorne Should Be Read, 5. The Car House, 6. The Great Cow Question.

II. Beginnings: 1. Fifty-seven words are used for a mere announcement of what the subject is to be. 2. This is prompt and business-like; it is hardly too abrupt. It suggests that the writer is looping back in his order—i. e., starting with the steel, going back to ore, and then coming around to steel again. 3. A prompt and direct attack upon the subject of "helping the sufferers in Europe." 4. States the subject at once and claims importance for it—so far good. But the sentence gives an impression of blind verbiage with its "glancing over the means," "think we shall all agree," "afford the most valuable methods." 5. Simply a flourish, a pouring out of words with the hope of working up to a beginning: "we have given some thought; however, we have not thought enough; and now the time has come to do some real thinking." 6. It is usually bad policy to promise that excitement is coming. We cannot see the reason of "we were to have an exciting adventure, *for* it was hot." The four sentences are groping for some way to begin.

III. Conclusions: 1. A mere pointing back to the theme. "The three great effects" might be strong closing words, but they are spoiled by tacking on "mentioned above." 2. The theme must have been on some such topic as "reveries suggested by a mountain scene"; it is bad judgment to close it with words that are equivalent to "so I turned my back on the scene and went away from it." 3. Closes with a mere pair of items, which have no relation to each other. 4. Weak reference to the theme, amounting to this: "If you have read carefully, you see what I mean." 5. A first-rate closing sentence, unless "hope of rain" at the very end is a suggestion opposed to the topic. A safer order would be "giving a hope of rain and deceiving the thirsty cacti." 6. To say that "the furnaces were receiving coal" is to suggest being

close to them; hence the writer forgets the impression of "at a distance" which ought to be the dominant note. The "disappearing flame" could have been a happy inspiration for giving the effect of distance, but it is not used to good effect. 7. The last sentence sounds like good emphasis, but it is so unprepared for by the preceding sentence that its force is destroyed. 8. Type of a poor close of a letter, because it uses a trite reason that is not usually true—or, if true, is not worth mentioning. 9. Excellent close, placing at the very end, with humorous capital letters, the error that was supposed to be dead. 10. Could hardly be worse. To stop with "number of cups seemed to diminish" would be tolerable, though weak; to go on from there by backing into the study of the mechanism once more is inexcusable; to close, after this added study, with "still a little puzzling" seems peculiarly witless.

LESSON 50

Very few of the boys I have taught sin by using pretentious or sentimental diction, yet it seems wholesome for them to know that such faults exist in the world and to see a few samples of it. They are thus forewarned against bad taste that might some time, under an unusual kind of pressure, be squeezed into their composition. The remark near the top of page 383 about school editors who fail to sound sincere has borne some fruit where I live. The use of trite expressions is a fault common among the most literal-minded if they have to stretch themselves to express some emotion; and the most matter-of-fact boy is sometimes prone to pile up terrifying words if he has not been shown the contrast between them and the plain, honest words.

"Pretending not to know words" is a peculiar trait of our American mind today. It was not known in this country a generation ago, and I suppose is not known much in England or France. In one way we should be proud of it, for it is an honest fear of seeming artificial. Some women fail to recognize and respect this cause of a meager vocabulary. It is very real. If a woman hopes to cajole a boy from such a fastness of the social habit of his age, she may accomplish nothing but to make the boy despise all composition as artificial truck. Only complete sympathy and tact will dislodge him or coax him a little way out of his wordless retreat.

Most students who read about genuineness on page 386 will see no meaning except "Don't pretend." Since they never do pretend, they will suppose that the page has no message for them. It has a message: Until we are trained, we cannot be genuine, because we cannot make our own selves appear in words. I have put this as forcefully as I can in the paragraphs of page 387, which are a peroration to a course in composition. Helen Keller could not be true to herself, but appeared to be an idiot, until she learned to use words. None of us can be true to ourselves in composition until we have learned the code by which an educated world judges us.

Some Comments on Sincerity and Insincerity

1. The first three sentences might come sincerely from a boy's mind, for the question is "burning" and "momentous" to him. But "play on the stage of life" sounds suspicious. The last two sentences are piles of words, which do not carry us toward anything. (The rest of the theme was a curious continuation of these generalizings that refused to take a side or to say anything definite.) 2. If the idea is simply that "the retail grocery business does not appeal to me," that fact can only be made absurd by garnishing it with "from my heart" and "unbiased judgment" and "all sincerity." 3. The subject is perfectly commonplace and concrete—teaching a Scout how to give first aid. There is no excuse for "undergo the several principles" and "important to accomplish" (even if these expressions meant anything) nor for the whole pile of abstract phrasings that tell us nothing. 4. One expression may appear an exaggeration—"as remote as though it was on another planet." But this is a customary kind of emphasis and is not untrue to the feelings of the boy in such surroundings. The wording is all direct, concrete, true. 5. Care should be taken to correct one misapprehension that is common in American schools and that destroys faith in vocabulary-building—the notion that several long words in one sentence are affected. This sentence is not false because of such words as *conceptions, suffice, illuminate.* These are excellent words, useful in composition. But this writer has no purpose as he uses each one; he is massing them without any feeling for his actual thought. "Beyond a doubt" is not sincere, for it is very doubtful whether he could have named two of the "numerous other examples"; he was not really thinking of "examples of conceptions" (if, indeed, anyone can think of such things); the absolute construction "this being as good as any" is stilted; he did not mean "merely let one suffice to illuminate," but that "one would be enough to illustrate." He is not thinking of meanings, but of a showy pile of phrases. 6. If any student can show that any word in the passage is false to the writer's actual meaning, he will do more than I can. Possibly two expressions are trite, *terrible* and *seething mass;* but all the words really help to picture the wild scene. 7. The feeling here may have been sincere, though even that is doubtful; it all sounds like a weak rhetorical fury, lashed by the hope of making a resounding paragraph. "Overwhelmed by the horde of self-evident evils" is not to be laughed at per se; it might convince us if the rest of the paragraph were different. What spoils the paragraph is the evident ranting in "forming their ideals of soul," "I must rise up in rebellion," "these little souls may be called upon," "idealism will be a ghost of the past." 8. This is an extreme example of attempting to heighten a commonplace subject by making a romantic background. Of course this writer has never been in the tropics or crossed the burning sands; she does not even station herself anywhere in space or time when she "turns her thoughts, as it were unconsciously, to the dimple of the universe." 9. Any sincere writer would have been unable to say "well-known principles"; he would necessarily have named some concrete principle that was in his mind.

No person who had an actual admiration for the actual wisdom of Emerson could have thought of "the intensive energy which individualizes," because "intensive energy" does not distinguish Emerson from Dumas or Karl Marx or Carl Sandburg. 10. There is no affectation discernible; every word is doing honest work. Students may not be able to visualize "half figure of a man floating along in a sea of vapor," but the queer effect would be clear enough if the whole passage could be read. 11. Any student who had actually known of such a stirring example of self-sacrifice could hardly have forced himself to cover up the actuality with this fluffy pile of vagueness. (Has any student known of such a case? I never have.) He hopes to be impressive by assembling some antique phrases: "prospective careers," "during our formative years," "indelibly impressed." 12. Some students will think that Maeterlinck's description is overdone; but no one has a right to such an opinion until he has carefully observed a swarm of bees and compared what he sees with what Maeterlinck reports. Every word is chosen for its truth.

LESSON 51

Teachers who are accustomed to the ordinary scansion schemes of "long and short syllables," with the classical names of feet and meters, may suppose that I have presented radical novelties in this lesson. So it is well for me to give assurance that I have no love for radical ideas in discussing English verse, and that the Lesson contains no novelties. For a quarter of a century I have taught the scansion of Shakespeare's and Milton's lines by using the prescribed formulas of iambic, trochaic, and what not. My lesson starts far back of all such machinery of scansion, far below all such technicalities. That is where the beginning should always be made, because most pupils have hardly any conception of the first rudiment of rhythm—stressed syllables. Not until they can detect the principal stresses in their natural reading are they ready for any scheme of scansion. If any teacher can train a class to hear the normal accents in the lines of the Exercise, he may then go as far as he likes in formalities.

My own choice is not to go much farther, except with small classes of selected students. And even with them a discussion of formalities is likely to breed wrong ideas and to be harmful. Anyone who doubts that statement should read some of the learned books on meter and see what mental gymnastics the authors impute to the poets—e. g., T. S. Omond. The poets have left very little testimony as to what they thought they were doing when they made verses; the reasonings of some scholarly critics lead us to a whirlpool of the subtleties of time and pitch; and most of the older treatises on verse have been colored and contorted by the theories of Greek and Latin metrics. The one outstanding fact for all of us non-professional lovers of verse is that the basis of English meter is the stress that is given in natural reading. Classes that go farther than that go at their peril.

Do you care to read some small and sensible books about our meters? I will indicate the nature of the four most suitable ones that I know: 1. R. M. Alden's *English Verse* is the safest one to recommend as a

general reference book; its rather long chapters on the subject are good exposition, carefully planned by a scholar who is always cited with respect—for example, Bliss Perry says, "His views have probably influenced mine even more than I am aware." 2. More conversational and addressed to young readers (though it is no child's book) is C. M. Lewis's *The Principles of English Verse;* the author was a thorough scholar, was himself a maker of verse, and gives the testimony of a mind very sensitive to poetical values. 3. Larger and more ambitious than either of these books is *Writing and Reading of Verse,* by C. E. Andrews. The style is racy and natural, and the judgments are offered without any dogmatism or affectation. The book has been much quoted and is influential. 4. *The Principles of English Versification* (200 pages), by P. F. Baum, is the most recent book on the subject (i. e., in 1924). It is somewhat technical and academic, but altogether sound and informative. Bliss Perry's charming *A Study of Poetry* contains a brief, non-technical explanation of meter, but most of its space and emphasis is used for higher matters.

I present that beginning of a bibliography just as an indication that the Lesson is not based on personal opinions. But neither is it based on scholarship. It is founded firmly on what I have found necessary and effective in the classroom. Some day I may yield to the temptation to write my own treatise on meter, but this elementary Lesson is no part of such an undertaking. It is in no sense a treatise on verse. It is a way of bringing the average student up to a point where he might begin to study the structure of verse—the point where he can hear and chart the principal stressed syllables.

Comments on the Exercise

I will indicate the stresses that would naturally be made in reading aloud the quotations in the Exercise, giving occasional hints at the variations that are possible. The right kind of recitation on this Exercise will welcome queries about other variations and will allow many possibilities beyond the normal scheme of meters; but in the case of all the normal stanzas the teacher's aim should be to show the general metrical plan. 1. For one example, which will illustrate all, an intelligent reader of the first line might give a pronounced accent to *when,* and might dwell on the syllable as long as on *there* or *snows;* but the obvious scheme of the stanza, as Whittier beat the time to himself, shows that he designed alternate lines of four beats and three beats, and it is unlikely that he wanted the first foot to be scanned "there *when.*" Whittier probably felt the major accents thus: there snows, bout, drift; win, winds, cold; hands, bro, grain, sift; knead, meal, gold.

2. The second stanza (by Robert Frost) will illustrate the fact (known to psychologists as well as to us mere teachers) that unsophisticated ears like meter to be regular. The reason why the second line does not seem like "poetry" is that two heavy accents come successively near the end; a student is well within his rights if he objects to this. The syllables naturally stressed: like, get, way, earth, while; then, back, it, gin, o; like, go, climb, birch, tree; climb, black (?), branch, up, snow, white (?), trunk (this line can easily be made, and would natu-

rally be made a fairly regular pentameter by dwelling a little less on black and white; hence it does not sound bumpy if skilfully read); to (?), heav, till, tree, bear, more; dipped, top, set, down, gain.

3. This stanza of Bret Harte is arranged in four lines of four major beats each, two lines of two beats each, and a closing line of five major beats: hark, hear, tramp, thou; (in the second line *and* does not receive a full stress in natural reading, but can easily be dwelt on, and we can guess from the four beats in the line with which it rimes that the writer gave it stress in his own scansion) and, arm, men, hum; lo, na, hosts, gath; round, quick, larm, drum; say, come; free, come; (both *ere* and *your* might well be dwelt on somewhat by a good reader, but the voice slides naturally to *her* for the first major accent) her, wast, quick, larm, drum. In the last line there are three rather prominent minor accents (ere, your, said); scanning the line as having beats does not deny the force of the minor accents, but shows where the five chief beats fall.

4. The stanza was written by Archibald Rutledge. The first and the third line begin with an accent that is followed by two unaccented syllables (or by three if *en* of darkening is pronounced); otherwise the feet have the accent at the end. The stanza is arranged in alternate lines of three feet and two feet. The accents: beau, earth, me; used, be; dark, rose, sun; stars, one (*ev* has a decidedly strong minor accent).

5. The stanza, by Damon Runyon, has four lines of seven distinct beats each: wheth, stand, des, plain, heart, si, wood; winds, sing, lone, graves, sun, stars, good; tell, tales, wrong, life, speak, rest, way; men, lone, graves, well (though *sleep* has a strong minor accent), wait, judg, day.

6. The stanza moves in alternate lines of four beats and three beats, though *fresh* in the second line is a very strong accent to slur over, and the *nots* in the fourth line naturally have emphasis. There should be no debate about these facts; for they are facts and should be welcomed. But the class can see by reading aloud other stanzas of *The Burial of Sir John Moore* what the general movement, the norm, is. The major accents: slow, sad, laid, down; field, fame, (fresh?), go; carved, line, raised, stone; left, lone, glo.

7. There is no telling whether Masefield put more accent on "I" or on "must"; all depends on whether he was emphasizing the idea of "must." The metrical peculiarity of the lines is the way in which the movement is made slow by placing strong accents together, as in tall ship, gray dawn break. Students, like many teachers, are apt to dislike this halting, yet Masefield's arrangement has been much admired by some and can be brought out pleasingly by a sympathetic reader. The accents: must (?) down, seas, gain, lone, sea, sky; all, ask, tall, ship, star, steer, by; wheel's, kick, wind's, song, white, sail's, shak; gray, mist, sea's, face, gray, dawn, break.

8. The key to scanning the second line is in the last line, with which it rimes; we can guess that Tennyson passed somewhat lightly over *gray* and gave three major accents. If so, the beats are: break, break, break; cold, stones, Sea; would, tongue, ut; thoughts, rise, me.

9. These lines are much more regular than most of the lines in the

Idylls: so (it is not likely that Tennyson read "so *when*"), King, set, ban, broad; once, ei, side, trump, blast; shouts, clar, shrill, un, blood; long, (lanced?), bat, let, hors, run.

10. These irregular lines, typical of the narrative passages in the *Idylls,* offer plenty of material for debate; yet there is not much question that a good reader would accent as follows: Prince, blood, spirt, on, scarf; dye, it (the pause after *it* causes the syllable to be dwelt on, though the voice may not "hit" it with real stress), quick, stinct, hand; caught, hilt, as (though it is not a full accent compared with the others), bol, him.

11. Stevenson's stanza consists of three four-beat lines, followed by a three-beat line: un, wide, star, sky; dig, grave, let, lie; glad, live, glad, die; laid, down, will.

12. It is possible that Guiterman tapped out his lines in six feet, each consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one, thus:

> The spár|row név|er strúg|gled whén| he foúnd| that hé| was caúght
> (If sóme|what slów| in ác|tion hé| was míght|y quíck| of thoúght),
> But chírped| in sím|ple díg|ni tý| that seémed|to fít| the cáse,
> "No gén|tle mán| would év|er éat| be fóre| he'd wáshed| his fáce."

There is some conflict between the accents of natural reading and the accents demanded by such scansion, but that is part of the fun of the thing; the conflicts are not frequent or strong.

It may be interesting to chart on the board the quite different scansion that can be made of the first two lines, and even of the third, but hardly of the last:

> The| spár row| név er| strúggled when he| foúnd that he was| caúght.

Indeed we can fancy that the writer wanted the three lines to run so, with five major beats to the line, and the last line to be a change of movement.

13. McCrae must have marked the beats thus: Flan, fields, pop, blow; tween, cross, row, row; mark, place, in (though this requires a decided forcing of the natural stress), sky; larks, brave (though *still* has a very strong accent and must be somewhat unnaturally slurred), sing, fly; heard (though *scarce* must be given less stress than is natural), mid, guns, low.

14. This bit of Whitman's free verse will show what very irregular meter is—indeed it is not meter, though the last two lines can be read rhythmically. The syllables naturally accented in ordinary reading: O, neer, joys; go, mo; hear, hiss, steam, mer, shriek, steam, whis, laugh, mo; push, sist, way, speed, off, dis.

15. Also from Whitman; after the first line the movement is almost iambic and can easily be made so in reading: night, prai; sup, o, fire, ground, burns (?), low; wea, em, sleep, wrapt, blank; walk, self, stand, look, stars, which (?), think, now, nev, re, fore.

16. This is a bit of student verse from *The Gleam.* In the first line *sad* has a decided accent, but close observation will show that the voice strikes harder and dwells more on *eyed;* so that the line naturally falls into a regular iambic movement with accents on *eyed, win,* and *stare.* The more pronounced accents in the other lines: gaunt, ware, stand, way; star, mute, an; blue, plac, bos, bay; bare, save (?), sun, (beams ?) *(bare* and *sun* receive more stress than the other two, but the voice dwells longer on *beams)*; flick, wa, play.

DAVY JONES'S LOCKER, PAGE 402

"The struggle with the ocean" is an endless epic. The illustration that naturally comes first to an American student's mind is Columbus. No topic is better. Anyone who can visualize the courage of the voyage, in such small vessels, obsessed by fears of the supernatural and the utterly unknown, has a new respect for humanity. A good reminder of what the voyage was in Clough's poem which inquires, "How in God's name did Columbus get over?"

LESSON 52

It will be poor policy to assign this Lesson as a whole. Use it in small parts, and don't assign any part until you have found that it is needed. Examples: if you do not yourself care about a hyphen in compound adjectives, you have no use for paragraph 2, and still less use for paragraph 3; if your students never use "cowardness" or "drunkardice," you do not need paragraph 6; paragraph 9 assembles many facts in small space and cannot be remembered if taken in a chunk; the verb forms in 10 are not emphasized as for eighth-year pupils, but are treated in an advanced way for use late in a high-school course; the forms of *lie* will not be taught by merely reciting on them five times—they can hardly be taught.

Paragraph 12 tells of a curious subject. The extra *have* is very elementary ignorance of verb forms, yet it is not mentioned in elementary texts, and many teachers of English use it.

Corrections of errors in the Exercise: 1. lie down. 2. doubtless; the impersonal *they* is not a real error, but is loose and poor here. 3. besought, farcical. 4. no error. 5. hard. 6. had eaten, lay down. 7. *red-haired* must be hyphenated; it will be curious to see how many of the class object to "I'll bet" or the omitted *that* before *there,* neither of which is an error. 8. *if I were,* contrary to fact; sleep well. 9. cupfuls. 10. no error. 11. after he had run away; worse. 12. species. 13. ten-year-old boys; more sweetly. 14. cowardice. 15. this stratum;

burst. 16. somewhere, were waked up. 17. oughtn't we; really expensive. 18. only son of the senator from Oregon, was drowned. 19. a phenomenon, anywhere. 20. no error. 21. weaker. 22. no error. 23. if I had only seen. 24. has the dust lain. 25. oughtn't we to telegraph. 26. nowhere.

LESSON 53

Only a small proportion of teachers are emancipated from the sort of prejudice described on page 411. The sources of most of our ignorance are two in number: (1) picking up a statement in a textbook, supposing that it is true, and teaching it until it becomes an article of faith; (2) reasoning logically that a certain idiom *cannot* be right. When statistics are some time compiled of the time wasted in American high schools with errors that are not errors, school boards will stand aghast.

None of us teachers can realize the danger of our fancying that certain idioms are "bad English" when they are perfectly good English. For years I wasted time on a fancy about the past tense of *dive;* and I now have great difficulty in keeping my hands off *due to* as a compound preposition in which *due* is not an adjective attached to any noun. Yet the evidence is overwhelming that I had better keep up with the times and accept *dove* and *due to* as modern facts of fairly respectable usage. Some teachers argue that the intransitive use of *graduate* is wrong, and no appeal to usage as guaranteed by all the dictionaries will alter their conviction. I once heard a spirited appeal, by a man high in the councils of a state association of teachers, against *as though;* he said it was an idiom that was sapping the lifeblood of pure English. Yet *as though* has been a literary connective as long as the history of our language is known. This man should know that the principal motive of the Society for Pure English is to protect the language from the whimsies of purists. There are teachers who abominate *so as to,* who will not alter their opinions because of quotations from a dozen makers of classics. No prayer of an English teacher should be made more devoutly and frequently than the petition that the good Lord may deliver us from all such false doctrines of purity.

If we teach on the basis of "right," we teach what is false and do not motivate students to care about right and wrong. If we teach on the basis of being "queer," we excite a very strong motive for self-correction—and we are in line with everlasting truth.

Beware of stressing the vulgarity or horribleness of wrong use of words. Students report at home what we say, and parents are alienated by our rash words; also other teachers and officials in the school are branded as vulgar and horrible people. Keep the touch light. Say that usage is variant and that many of the wrong meanings on pages 415-420 are often used by the finest kind of people. Especially I should beware of the words numbered "2"; regard these cases as rather bookish information, useful to have, but not of much moment. *Aggravate* is a fair sample: professors of English know the etymology and the literary

meaning perfectly well, yet few of them refrain from the colloquial meaning of "irritated."

Many teachers do not understand what "colloquial" means in a dictionary. It does not signify that a word is improper, but only that it would not be suitable in lofty or impassioned utterance. *Don't* is colloquial, because it would give a conversational flavor to a line of poetry or to a sentence in an elevated sermon. Colloquial means acceptable in cultured speech.

Assign the words a few at a time, and assign only those that you think will be beneficial.

What do you think about *shall* and *will*? For my part, I have given up the fight, because I cannot elevate boys above the speech standards of our last five presidents. I have seen in a learned journal an article by a professor of English who argued that our language has changed for the better by dropping the distinction of *shall* for the first person. I have put a few *shalls* in the Exercise. If you ask a class about sentence 5, and encourage the doubt about *shall*, you will discover, unless you teach in northern New England, that an almost unanimous feeling prefers *will*. It seems that *shall* "don't sound good."

The list of idioms objected to in Lesson 53 is the result of two processes: (1) Sifting out unfounded imaginings from the lists of "bad diction" ordinarily printed in textbooks. The sifting, you understand, was done in every case by ample assurance from authorities that the idioms were not opposed to good usage. (2) Adding those errors which are common all over the country, but have not been generally entered in textbooks.

It took me many years to learn that all emphasis in the classroom should be on the right form. In explaining to an older person, whose mind is keen for new knowledge, we dilate on distinctions. In the classroom our problem is different; here we are trying to establish the one right usage in minds that are ignorant and that have not a very keen interest. More and more I have learned to leave the error unmentioned—even to refuse answers to questions about the errors—in order to drive home to the bulk of the class what they need to learn.

Comments on the Exercise

The following comments simply point out the idioms that are objectionable in the Exercise, and does not attempt to indicate the proportional emphasis that each should receive. Unless a teacher supplies such emphasis, the Exercise may do harm. For example: the "implied" and "exhorted" in sentence 3 are out-and-out blunders; whereas "enthused" in sentence 1 is a matter of taste. There are cultivated makers of books who snap their fingers at all the textbooks and use "enthused," but there is no reporter so lackadaisical about words as not to be ashamed of "exhort a howl."

1. Wasn't very enthusiastic about, but this duty was a strong influence in teaching. 2. Was interesting compared with what. 3. Are applied, are likely to bring (or extort?) a howl. 4. Is composed. 5. Be afraid of. 6. No error. 7. Exclamatory such (which may be in good

taste if intended to give a colloquial effect), I wish I could have afforded. 8. I should be (dreadfully? sadly?) discouraged, ended in a fizzle. 9. The equipment for playing golf consists of (or, better, The game of golf is played with). 10. No error. 11. Into a bush, cat was much irritated or vexed. 12. Teachers take part in. 13. Made a fairly good score (but *quite* in this sense is extremely common among fastidious speakers). 14. No error. 15. Was an inscription saying that. 16. No error. 17. I should like, but somehow I don't seem, or but somehow I can't see my way. 18. No error. 19. No error. 20. No error. 21. I shall. 22. It came to be. 23. No error. 24. At the beginning, succeed or qualify or whatever is meant. Class discussion may reveal that every suggested substitute is lacking in the definite meaning conveyed by *make good.* That is the very reason why the new idiom has progressed so rapidly. 25. No real error. The *will* is correct, because the speaker is showing determination. *Between every book* is entirely illogical, but what shall we say? Between all the books is just as bad; between each two books would strike every ear in an audience as an affectation. I have quotations from several highly respectable authors who have decided to be illogical rather than freakish. 26. Epitaph. 27. Wouldn't the humor of the sentence be more humorous if Fuzz and Buzz were repeated instead of using the former and the latter? 28. Substitute *almost anything* for *with respect to*—as to, when I considered the ways. Why not omit such lumber altogether and say that my best chance of earning a few dollars seemed to be? 29. Has finished, exhausted or half dead or strange—or whatever the writer had in mind. 30. Would not submit to or tolerate. 31. Other wild doings there were.

LESSON 54

When we study a foreign language, we discover that the prepositions are extremely idiomatic, forming phrases that have a meaning which is independent of the literal meanings of the preposition and its object. We often discover in speaking our own language that we are not sure which preposition is idiomatic, and we know that the wrong preposition will make us "queer." In this lesson I have gathered the most common misuses of prepositions as they occur in themes from many schools. It is useless to depend on any logic or any reasoning from the general meaning of a preposition, for a preposition has no meaning. We can succeed only by stating the particular fact about each particular combination that goes wrong.

The Lesson will remain a chaos to any student who does not follow such a program as that in the second paragraph of page 422. He should not try to remember the whole lesson. He should read it all to see what is said and should record what he needs; then he should study his record. Urge the class to study and repeat the *right* phrases; help them by putting all your stress on what is right. A little needless comment on "once and a while" may fasten that monstrosity in the mind of some student; what he needs is to see and to hear several times, on several different days, "once *in* a while, once *in* a while."

Comments on the Exercise

Errors in the Exercise: 1. Deals with. 2. No error. 3. Considered this. 4. Said we should go. 5. With regard to the tree. 6. Contemplate the fact. 7. No objection to (*like* is strictly correct, with an object, *concern*). 8. No error. 9. No error. 10. No error. 11. No error. 12. Devoted to trying. 13. Give me no pleasure. 14. Described the cells. 15. No error. 16. Omit *old* (perhaps use *more than* for *over*). 17. No error. 18. Omit *about*. 19. Get off the car. 20. No error. 21. *Above* in this sense is a fine old literary idiom, but *more than* is commoner today. 22. Different from what it did. 23. No error. 24. No error; *for* in this sense is an established idiom. 25. No error; *regards* is a verb and is proper. 26. A big difference, to my mind, between. 27. There is no such idiom as *to the blame of*, though it would be very convenient here. *To the discredit* is possible; some entirely different construction is preferable. 28. No error. 29. No error. 30. On the whole. 31. Resist paying. 32. Don't remember anything. 33. No error. 34. All students who like to "understand prepositions" will indignantly demand *about* or *as to* before the *what* clause; and we must agree with their preference. But this way of using the *what* clause after *doubt* has much warrant in literature. Cf. No. 37 below. 35. Treats of. 36. No error. 37. No error. 38. Differently from what. 39. No error. 40. "To which we should give all the help" or omit the *to*. 41. No error.

LESSON 55

The lesson is for classes that have conquered most of the rudiments. Every item in it has been useful in the upper classes of my own school, but only one item is of elementary importance—the use of *like*. This is as much of a problem as *shall*. In 1903, when I began to teach in western Connecticut, I seldom heard the conjunction *like* from New England boys; by 1920 I heard it from all of them. To me personally the conjunctional use is unpleasant, even to show a comparison, as in "like they used to be." Yet I have to recognize that few of my friends share this dislike. What to do? Nothing can guide us but our own sense of what will do most good in our community. We must tell the class frankly what the situation is and show that we are not puristic cranks. I think of three steps in applying a taboo: (1) Don't use in your writing a *like* that means *as if*. (2) Don't use in your writing either kind of conjunctional *like*. (For the two kinds see (a) and (b) of page 434.) (3) Don't use *like* as a conjunction in either speech or writing.

Like is a good preposition—an excellent one—as in "He flushed like a guilty person." The error is caused by adding a verb, as in "He flushed like a guilty person would" or "He flushed like he was guilty."

Misuses in the Exercise

1-4. No errors; *than* in 4 is correct after *more*. 5. Should be no *as*. 6. No error according to the fiction standards of the day, but *hushed* is

freakish according to any other standard. 7. Such as I saw. 8. No error. 9. And all of them had a good time. 10. Don't know that. 11. The way the pretty girls do. 12. He explained to us the whole process. 13. No error; there is no dictionary warrant for the claim that *further* and *farther* have distinct meanings. 14. Preferred . . . . . to. 15. No error, for *purred* used in this way has long been accepted. 16. No error. 17. No error. 18. Omit *as*. 19. The way the small boy does; *the way* is less formal and easier for pupils to adopt than *as*. 20. No error. 21. No error; *fine* is the adjective after *sound*. 22. *Weep* should not be used before a quotation with the quotation as its object. 23. So that I can see. 24. Looks just as if. 25. When I saw that. 26. No error. 27. Omit *as*. 28. And promised more if there was need. 29. *Crisped* is like *hushed* in No. 6. 30. The sentence would be correct if *as* were omitted; most students would feel more comfortable with the equally correct "is thought of as a real person."

LESSON 56

There are no sharp lines to be drawn between the classes of blunders; the definition of barbarism, for example, is simply a common custom in rhetorics and is not the general meaning of the term in literature. Tell students that the three classes are only assortments for convenience in school. The needless words described under (a), (b), and (c) on page 439 would not ordinarily be called tautology, which is "a repetition of the same meaning by the use of different words, without any added force"; but they are most conveniently grouped here. "Prolixity" is a term commonly explained in chapters on blunders with words; it refers to a prevailing wordiness and repetitiousness all through a passage.

The kind of emphasis that this lesson should have is indicated in the middle of page 438—"mortified if he discovers that he is guilty of an impropriety." Compare the use of *except*, page 216, as an example of the chagrin caused by a blunder in words. Here is a strong social motive, the fear of being "queer."

The recklessness of some students in objecting to idioms with which they are unfamiliar would pass understanding if we did not know that their elders and betters do just the same thing. Such presumptuous ignorance deserves more censure than the dullness that cannot find the real errors.

Comments on the Exercise

Blunders in the Exercise: 1. No error. 2. The writer seems to have imitated the form of uplifting in using the meaning of *uphold;* the result is queer. The normal word would be *encouraging*, but this might not be true to just the meaning intended; the writer may have meant "tending to support." 3. *Utterly* and *entirely* may have been used by careful writers, but it is poor tautology. 4. And utilize every spare minute. 5. No error. 6. *Worsen* would be a handy word here, but there is no authority for it. 7. No error. 8. The writer uses *despondent* to mean "causing despondency." He might not like to

accept the word *discouraging.* But what would he propose? 9. Was awarded. 10. Omit *however,* sheep. 11. Omit *little.* 12. Omit *take and.* 13. Omit *and etc.* 14. In a kind of peremptory tone. *Demanding,* like several words commented on above, is a real effort to come near a certain meaning, and so is not to be laughed at. It is a good effort gone wrong. 15. Made me despair. 16. Omit *immediately.* 17. Grab hold of. 18. No error. 19. Omit *however.* 20. No error. 21. Omit *and etc.* 22. Before it has aged. 23. No error. 24. Omit *nevertheless,* a sort of fool or pretty much of a fool. 25. Omit *went and.* 26. Burglarized—though even this form is frowned upon by the very pure, who would require "had been entered by burglars." 27. It is easy to poke logical fun at *screeched straight* and to require *went screeching straight* but it is likely that a jury of authors would vote against the logic. 28. Omit *people,* to avoid the combination with *popular.* 29. Try to count—though quotations from good authors can be cited to justify *try and.* Students should be told that the use is one to learn to avoid, and that later in life they may decide to use it if they care to. 30. In the garb. 31. *Murk* was used in this way by a modern writer of fiction who is an adept at coining phrases. He seemed to mean *scud* but may have meant "a hurrying patch of darkness." These facts are neither here nor there in our work. What counts is to see whether Miriam Jonquil will object to *murk* without knowing in the least what it means. 32. He began another kind of appeal.

LESSON 57

Some day an essayist is going to make himself famous by exploiting the subject of "The Slang Pharisees." He will gather from composition texts the solemn harangues about the sinfulness of slang, and will contrast all this ranting poppycock with the way professors of English literature dote on slang and covet the latest growths of it. He will quote the scathing words of Henry A. Beers, an American man of letters who was a professor of English at Yale for forty years and was noted for the refinement of his taste and the delicacy of his verse and the sensitiveness of his perceptions of literary values. He declared in *Educational Review* for May, 1892, when writing about the new subject of English as a college preparatory requirement: "Schoolmasters' English —the English which boys writing themes are taught to use—is carefully denuded of all peculiarities, and among other things which it holds in horror is slang. Pedants, prigs, purists, precisians, and all dry-witted and thin-witted persons naturally hate slang, because it is alive. But men of rich natures love slang. It is the wild game of language. It abounds in imagination, humor, strength, comes warm from the lips of people, and is the fresh product of the creative impulses by which all language was originally made."

Such raillery will have no effect on you if you despise slang. It is not quoted here to alter your opinion. It is to show how most of the human race feel about slang—especially that portion of the race that makes literature and that part that goes to high school. If you preach

against slang, you will antagonize every boy that you hope to win for the cause of better composition.

Tell him how the lettered world delights in slang—he will be much tickled. Then tell him how the lettered world pities a boy who doesn't feel the difference between slang and decent language—he will flush and begin to have the kind of feeling you want him to have.

The lesson is about taste. It is the depth of poor taste to feel that our limited knowledge amounts to much as a measure of good and bad. We must be modest and amenable if we wish to go right. We injure students if we encourage them to sit in judgment and pronounce that everything which is unfamiliar to them must be "bad English." Teach them to inquire, not to make verdicts. There is no estimating the harm we do if we encourage pupils, ignorant of the vast fields of usage, to peck at every phrase which offends their ignorance. That is precisely the wrong attitude of mind. We should never presume to judge unless we have definite knowledge.

Comments on the Exercise

1. "His face reminded Billy," etc., is an admirable sentence—unless some very severe person feels that "a face cannot have a soaring expression." Yet that was exactly what the author had felt and brought out forcibly. 2. There seems no excuse for *guess* or *gets to* or *go some* in dignified writing. Yet the great majority of professors of English would use *guess* and *gets to* in easy conversation. *Go some* is of course pure slang. 3. *Went like hot cakes* is trite; so is *by leaps and bounds.* 4. This is almost verbatim from a newspaper advertisement of a book that is said to confer mastery of English in a few weeks; the pile of adjectives is as bad as the old-fashioned advertisements of a circus. (There, by the way, is a good illustration from practical life: circus managers learned that they had made their posters absurd by the piles of adjectives.) 5. Here are a good many startling words, and the author is evidently striving to impress us; but see how true to the facts each expression is. The description is of some naval cadets stoking furnaces on board ship. Pause at the items that report exactly the sounds and sights and feelings: "Rasp," sang the shovels, grating, ribbed floor, clang, white intensity, withering heat, a ninety-pound bar under a hundred-pound clinker, eyebrows singed off, gloves smoldering. 6. A perfectly plain, matter-of-fact statement. Will some sleuths of diction object to *down* and *away* as needless? Such adverbs, not logically necessary, are part of the genius of English idiom; especially is this true of the dozens of uses of *up. Down* and *away* should on no account be objected to. 7. A sample of a dentist's jargon in an article written to be a popular exposition in a very popular weekly. No one had ever taught him how comical his jargon is—especially since perfectly ordinary words would express his meaning quite as well; he has no deep secrets to convey. He says *potent factor* and *untoward influence* with just the same sleepy artlessness as he uses *peridental* and *occlusal.* 8. A fair sample of the curious way in which many students shovel in words when they gird themselves for a

lofty style: in connection with this matter, in reference to. 9. Nothing to object to, since the slang reports what these characters in a story said. If *once over* and *cut that stuff* were expressed in pure terms, the passage would be reduced to absurdity. 10. Some students may feel that the paragraph contains too many technicalities—gallate, basis, befalls, oxidation, weathering, oxide. And they are partially right. But in the main, and compared with the vocabulary that most scientists might have used, the passage is a clear and plain likening of ink to a steel blade. 11. *Nothing doing* is in bad taste when telling of a situation in literature. 12. Doubtless there will be a chorus of protest that *up* is needless—and so it is. Yet it is also highly idiomatic and entirely proper. 13. *All eyes and ears* would be absurd if custom had not made it proper. The passage is true to the facts described and has not a jot of affectation in it. 14. *Stand for* is crude in such literary company. 15. If Kid Jerry is in a story, this is the way he must talk. Whether he ought to be in a story—that is a question for another kind of court to settle. 16. There are stilted, meaningless words: propose, means whereby, with respect to. 17. The items of the description are carefully adjusted to the picture in the author's mind; they may be overdrawn, but they express no untruth or affectation. 18. *I'll say he was* is a slangy absurdity in discussing such worthies. 19. Has trite expressions, which no modern journalist would use except under pain of death: festive board, have in our midst—and possibly the delights of literature. 20. *Wee bit* might be bad taste in a funeral oration or a serious poem, but in any style below the very elevated it is good idiom. 21. *Poor but honest* is so meaningless that it is a wonder it ever lived to become trite. 22. *Put across* is now used so generally by serious lecturers—e. g., from Teachers College speaking to teachers of English—that I should not dare to condemn it. To me it seems trite and dull. But I try to curb my prejudices. Shouldn't we all try to do that?

LESSON 58

If this way of presenting metaphors is strange to you, don't adopt it on trust; for it cannot succeed if a teacher is not in sympathy with it. If the Lesson seems long-winded, give thanks that you have found some briefer way to present the subject. If the Lesson seems to you unimportant or above the stage of high-school composition, by all means omit it; it is decidedly not elementary. If it seems an unnatural or cranky way of going to work, suspend judgment till you have read the next paragraph.

For a dozen years I slid easily along over a little chapter on metaphors in a textbook. The subject was obvious to me and seemed obvious to the boys; they never appeared uneasy. Of course I noticed that the recitation on the brief Exercise was not satisfactory, but then few recitations are satisfactory. So I considered that figures of speech had been covered and went on to the next subject. About 1910 it began to dawn on me that I was sliding over the Lesson. I dug down into it a bit. The moment I did so I struck a rock; boys had no conception of *what was compared to what*. The very basis of any con-

ception of a trope was—well, you see my metaphor grows mixed, boy-like, as I try to describe the boyish condition of mind. My feeling was as hopeless as if I had banged a spade on a boulder. Next year I devoted five whole minutes to expounding "what is compared to what"; the following year ten minutes; the third year fifteen. I could not bring the light of intelligence to boys' eyes except by putting before them one illustration after another. The parable of the mustard seed was the most effective one I ever found, because it is so extreme: Christ wanted to show vividly how his humble little band of followers could expect a great result from their efforts; he illustrated, compared; he said the disciples were like a tiny seed, insignificant now, but destined to grow to greatness. I found that cartoons were helpful examples of the nature of metaphors. I found that boys indulged in pure guesses unless they began with "what is the author talking about?" and followed this with "what does he compare it with?" Four-fifths of the class would vote that "the cold hand of death stalked into our midst" was a good metaphor, and the other fifth could not tell why it was bad. It took time and effort to make them see that the writer was talking about the plain fact of little Mary's death, and that he used the ancient comparison of the fact of death to a human hand—death seems to seize upon people as a great hand might. Another writer could compare death to a grisly skeleton that stalked into our midst and destroyed a life. Either comparison is a proper illustration. But the combination —death is like a hand that stalks—is a screaming farce. It took another ten minutes to persuade boys that "my heart was like a cold boiled potato" was a reasonable metaphor, because it made only one comparison—of my feelings to a cold, clammy, disagreeable chunk of repulsive food. No other way of going to work was ever revealed to me. My time was all too short, and I could not afford to linger; but no shortening of the process was ever possible. I never could discover, though I exercised my ingenuity violently, any form of approach except to start at the bottom of the nature of a figure of speech. So this Lesson 58 grew, against my will, as naturally as a stone spear evolved among savages. It is the best I could make. If you have a repeating rifle that is an improvement on my primitive weapon, tell the *English Journal* about it and help all us backward, stone-age teachers.

A word about why the subject is important in composition. The percentage of complete figures used in themes is very small; in that regard the subject is of little importance. But the "semi-metaphors" (pages 456 and 457) are of frequent occurrence and often cause sad mixtures. I have never felt that a boy was fit to graduate from school until he understood why "a factor cast into the shade" is a mixed metaphor.

Comments on the Exercise

Part I of the Exercise: 1. The Order is compared to something that should be held upright and that should be cultivated as if it were a crop. 2. The feeling of energy caused by the scenery is compared to a liquid put in drop by drop (instilled) and to an atmosphere. 3. The attitude of China is compared to a keynote and to a point of view.

4. Our hope that Mr. Sexton would say yes is likened to a ray of light and to a bubble. 5. He is compared to a person sowing wild oats and to a person who comes out on top. 6. Commerce is compared to something that we stumble on and to something that can be regulated. 7. The work of the Y. M. C. A. is compared to something played and to a factor; a factor cannot be "played." 8. Investment is compared to a heart and to a necessary part of a machine—as if a machine had an animal's heart. 9. Alcohol is represented first as a ship that makes a wake in the water and then to a beast that leaves a trail. 10. Agitators are compared to people going aboard a ship and then to people who are determined to crush something. What could they crush on a floating vessel? 11. The War is compared first to a blot and then to taking a step. 12. The feeling of patriotism is likened first to a wave and then to something that injects; injection must be made by some pointed instrument. 13. The villainy is first compared to somebody who wears a mask and then to something that is colored by a stain which has soaked into the fibers. 14. The question is first compared to something both deep and heavy, which the writer could not visualize; then to a place where a wind blows—that is, a wind blows at the bottom of something deep and ponderous. 15. The feelings are compared to something bitter that is thrown into a shade—as if a bottle of vinegar were cast under a tree? The grief that does this casting is compared to something "stinging" (poignant) and to something that can twist.

PART II OF THE EXERCISE: 1. There is no figure in the first clause; in the second clause the kick is called a "handling"—as if a foot handled. 2. The merits of the car might be combined in some way for a comparison, but they could not be combined into a standpoint; no single standpoint could be combined. 3. The figure is consistent, for mountains are compared to persons raising their heads scornfully, and to nothing else. But the mountains are made rather absurd by "defying" the lowly country beneath them. 4. Sails are well compared to mules pulling. 5. No figure. 6. How could a standard—some inanimate object—be "well off"? How could it be "guided"? 7. The figure might be called consistent, because his health receives the sacrifice of a demon. But who ever heard of offering up a demon as a sacrifice? To what deity would it be an acceptable sacrifice? 8. "Pouring out a curtain" is a queer process, but it may be over-nice to object to the expression. The chimneys do pour out smoke, and the smoke does become a curtain. 9. Cuba is likened to a thorn and to something that "becomes a part of our flesh" (incorporated). Can a thorn ever be incorporated? Unless it can, the figure is mixed. 10. No figure. 11. Ardent means literally burning, and so the sentence says that what was burning was kindled. Strictly this could be called a boggled figure, but would never appear boggled except to a person who was sensitive to the old and literal meaning of ardent. 12. The only question is about "putting themselves in a new light." Surely the writer did not have a mental picture of the women stepping under some spotlight which had not illuminated them before. If he has not mixed his figure, he has been helped by a lucky accident. 13. The action taken is likened to something touchable (tangible) and to a step. 14. A good figure; the lumbering operations on the vast forest are likened to the nibbling of small animals on a large

mass of food. 15. The success is likened to something that is brilliant and that can plunge a person into gloom. What could such a thing or process be?

THE APPENDIX

Very few users of *Theme-Building* would care for any dissertation on the ways of handling the letter forms or the spelling or the grammar or the punctuation of the Appendix. If a teacher has always done advanced work and wants to see what this modern agitation for rudiments is all about, he should write to the publishers for a copy of the *Pilot Book* for *Sentence and Theme, Revised,* which will be sent without charge. It is a book of 272 pages that explains what the crusade of Minimum Essentials tries to accomplish, and why schools nowadays have to put upon rudiments an emphasis that was hardly known before 1910. It describes in detail the strategy of grammar that directs all the operations of *Sentence and Theme,* and that is essential to a successful use of the grammar and punctuation of the Appendix. The whole subject of foundation work is thoroughly discussed in *What Is English?,* Scott, Foresman and Company.

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